



FOR THE LOVE OF PORT™
COLLECTIVE PORT WISDOM

Christmas & New Year's are upon us and FTLOP's staff wishes you and your family a wonderful holiday season and the best of health! This "double *year-end* issue" is packed with 125 pages of content. There are 2 versions of issue **#87**, both offers PDF downloads. Subscribers receive all content and *special features, of course*. The once-per-year FREE .pdf version provides 85% of the goods, including all photos and my TN section, but the *special features* are not included.

It all begins with a brief *video* portraying a day-in-the-life of workers in the Douro Valley during the **2015 harvest**. The natural beauty of this region shines brightly and it's well worth a few minutes of your time. **Miguel Braga**, winemaker/master blender at **Quinta do Mourão** explains how to properly open and pour bottles of **S. Leonardo's** "60" and "100" Old Tawny Ports in his video short. FTLOP's blogger, **Fernando Correia** reports from Porto, sharing insights from a fine tasting that paired the wines of **Quinta Nova** with culinary creations by **Pedro Lemos**.

This edition's **Guest Corner Article** by Madeira maven **Marco DeFreitas**, recounts an historic 20th Anniversary Celebration honoring the long standing business relationship between **The Rare Wine Company** and **Vinhos Barbeito**. A grand Madeira party ensued and you will read exactly which Madeiras were served, in Marco's brilliant write up. Next up is **Diana Leão Costa's** take on her participation during this year's *first ever* **5 Regions Tour**. We don't have too many guests join us from Portugal, so as you'll read she has a unique, informed, perspective to share.

Speaking of tours, we finally announce dates & details for our **2016 Portugal Wine Tours** inside. One of our tours has already sold out. So we've decided to add an additional tour this year. With two of our other tours ½ way filled already, thanks to the USD strength, we're excited for 2016!

Back to newsletter **#87**: The photographic series, **PORTrait of Porto** is included for your viewing pleasure. In 2016, we will include photo submissions from our readers to utilize here. The **FTLOP Feature Article** is entitled, **The Majesty of Malvasia** and tells the story of our annual NYC event, with 20 historic bottles focused on the Malvasia grape, aka Malmsey.

Port Personalities in Focus shines a spotlight on an individual that some readers will instantly recognize. Learn more about the life of this Port trade insider. Oh yeah, almost forgot to mention the **Subscribers Only Buyer's Opportunity** below. Looking for another one of our importer-direct exclusive deals on Port & Douro wines? Well folks, here it is and you won't beat the great provenance of ex-cellar bottles or the prices! Next, **Mr. Tawny** wrote a special article on **FTLOP's 10th Anniversary** party. Read it and feel like you were there tasting with us! Lastly, **Roy's Tasting Note Section** has evaluations of old and newer Ports and Douro wines in it.

Thanks for your support & best wishes for 2016 and have a great New Year's Eve celebration. Be safe!

Roy

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PORT VIDEO RECOMMENDATION



So you have never been to Portugal before? Even though you love to drink Port and appreciate Douro wines too, somehow visiting Porto, Vila Nova de Gaia and the Douro still remains on your bucket list. Then this is the video for you!

You are witnessing the 2015 harvest. Sit back and take four minutes of your time to appreciate what it is like to work at a quinta during one long day of the harvest. In this case it is Quinta S. Luiz, owned by Sogevinus. The grapes from this property are used to make the fine wines that go into every bottle of Kopke Ports and Douro wines. Besides observing what takes place at this quinta in the midst of the hustle and bustle of harvest, you will see the grand vistas and hand-sculpted terraces of these majestic vineyards, with the Douro River shown in the background.

For those of you that have ventured over to Northern Portugal and seen all of this before, the video will bring back fond memories of one of the most beautiful places on earth. You may even recognize some of the people who are in these images. Grab a glass of Port, sit back and enjoy!

<https://vimeo.com/145623008>

FROM A RECENT BUYING OP



Earlier this year, FTLOP offered a Subscriber's Only Buying Opportunity in coordination with both **Quinta do Mourão's** owner **Miguel Braga** and his new US importer, **D'Ouro Vino Selections/Ayesha Trump**. According to Miguel & Ayesha, the **S. Leonardo** Port and Douro wine sales in the offering blew away any expectations they had for the initial launch into the US market.

Additionally, the sales of the "60" and "100" year old wood-aged Ports were exceptionally strong and continue to be moving quickly even at the new retail prices that took effect after our buying op expired. To aid those that have these new bottle's, (the "60" would only pertain to those who've re-upped and purchased bottles available in 500 ml format in the cork packaging shown above) Miguel has put together a brief [video](#) that provides tips on opening and pouring these unique bottles. For those of you that purchased the 10, 20, 30, 40 Year Old Tawny Ports, (or Douro wines) this won't apply, but you may like to see what the inside of the packaging looks like anyway.

Here is the URL for Miguel's video located on the *D'Ouro Vino Selections*, website:

<http://www.d-ourovino.com/ftlop15>

FERNANDO CORREIA'S BLOG



Roy's Note: Fernando has been posting to the FTLOP blog since September and let's face it, he had some pretty big shoes to fill. I don't know how many of you check the FTLOP homepage in order to see his posts, but as he is based in Porto, and a brilliant doctor in addition to Port lover and enthusiast of Portuguese wines, he has a unique vantage point from which to provide his insights. In the future, Fernando will also be blogging some interviews of some members of the Port trade and will include other cool topics for us as well. I've incorporated his latest work here in the newsletter, to bring more attention to the excellent writing Fernando has been providing!

An evening with Quinta Nova & Pedro Lemos

We all have our safe havens. In Porto, I have two safe havens for wine. One of them is *Vinoteca*, in the Ribeira, a fantastic wine cellar/tapas bar, which I will undoubtedly address in more detail in following posts. The other is *Garrafeira Tio Pepe*, which over the years has become not only my regular wine cellar, but also a place where I have found a couple of good friends.

As it happens, I was invited by Garrafeira Tio Pepe to attend the presentation of the wines from the 2013 harvest from *Quinta Nova de Nossa Senhora do Carmo*. This is something you never say no to, especially because it took place in a fantastic restaurant, Pedro Lemos, the Michelin-starred restaurant of the homonymous chef. A high praise is owed to him and his wife, Joana, for what they have achieved so far, and will continue to achieve in the future. As a curiosity, I also recommend their other project, *Stash*, a sandwich bar with a gourmet twist in Porto's downtown.

Before continuing, I need to clarify my opinion about these events in general and Quinta Nova in particular. All of the wines that were tasted were still very young, especially the reds, which I think aren't even ready to be sold in the market. Therefore, these events become more a glimpse of the future than an image of the present, and the corresponding tasting notes are, in reality, a rough assessment of the potential of each wine.

With this said, let us move on, but not without a brief explanation about Quinta Nova and the 2013 vintage conditions. Quinta Nova is a 120 hectare propriety located in the Cima Corgo sub-region of the Douro valley, with 85 hectares of planted vineyards. The soil is mainly composed of schist and the solar orientation is mainly south/west. Given the considerable size of the vineyard, several micro-terroirs exist, with a huge biological diversity to work with.

The 2013 harvest was very tricky in the Douro Valley, as the year was a bit cooler and there was heavy rain during harvest almost everywhere in the Douro. In Quinta Nova, where they managed to harvest before the rain, the vintage was good, producing overall more mineral and elegant wines. The two whites tasted were from the 2014 vintage, a very balanced year overall and with sunny weather during vintage.

Oysters and Tartare toasts were served as starters, accompanied by Grainha Branco 2014. Made from Gouveio, Viosinho, Rabigato and Fernão Pires. It was aged for 6 months in new and used oak casks, with 15% of the wine going through malolactic fermentation. I would say it is a good example of a mid-level Douro wine, a bit more austere in the nose than I was expecting. On the palate it remained austere, with a welcome acidity that gave it more elegance than in previous vintages, and the malolactic barely noticed. I expect it to be fully settled in about 12 months and become one of those no-fail wines.

We moved on to codfish "from head to tail", a hymn to the Portuguese fishing tradition and flavors, accompanied by Mirabilis Grande Reserva Branco 2014. This wine is made from Viosinho, Gouveio and from a field blend of very old vines (>80 years old), and was aged for 9 months in partially new oak, "sur lies". Again restrained in the nose, with some hints of tropical fruit and oak already clearly noticeable. On the palate it remains very balanced and with good

acidity, but the wood is still not integrated and is, at this point, still overwhelming. Even though it has too much wood for my personal taste, I expect it to become a very fine wine within a few years (3-5?). By the way, tapping into an ongoing discussion among the Portuguese about which wines to pair with codfish, my opinion (and, apparently, Pedro Lemos agrees) is that codfish is better served with oak-aged whites than with young reds.

We were then served pork tenderloin (of a native breed called, "Porco Preto") with mushrooms, which was paired with two reds - Quinta Nova Reserva Tinto 2013 and Quinta Nova Grande Reserva Tinto 2013. These reds represent the most terroir-driven wines in the range. The Reserva is made from a field blend of old vines, Tinta Roriz, Tinta Amarela, Tinto Cão and Touriga Nacional, and is aged in both new and second-year oak barrels. On the nose, the typical Douro bouquet of red and black fruits. On the palate very elegant, with a nice balance between the sweetness of the fruit and the acidity, tannins still a bit rough, but finely grained and a nice "surgically" acidic/peppery aftertaste.

The Grande Reserva is made from 25% old vines and 75% Tinta Roriz, fermented in oak and aged in new oak barrels for 20 months. The same distinctive bouquet but a bit more closed, also with hints of vanilla. On the palate again very elegant, more so than the previous one, but with the wood still not integrated. The Reserva will definitely be drinkable sooner, and the one I enjoyed more at this stage, but I reckon this Grande Reserva will become a fantastic wine in 7-10 years' time.

We then moved on to pigeon and foie gras, accompanied with another pair of reds - Quinta Nova Grande Reserva Referencia Tinto 2013 and Mirabilis Grande Reserva tinto 2013. The Grande Reserva Referencia is made in a similar fashion as the Grande Reserva, but with more Tinta Roriz. At this point, in all honesty, besides a more fragrant bouquet of red fruits and a very well balanced wine, it was for me very difficult to distinguish this wine from the last. Perhaps it was palate fatigue coming into play, but I kind of always feel a bit lost when companies start producing a lot of different references within the same style.

The Mirabilis Grande Reserva is a very intriguing project, transcending terroir and aiming at producing one a "jewelry" wine. Made from a combination of old vines, Tinta Amarela and 10% selection of wine from other barrels (undisclosed), it is aged for 20 months in new oak barrels. Fantastic bouquet of black fruits; on the palate it was very round and poised with very, very elegant tannins and with a very long, warm and spicy after palate. A true masterpiece.

As a dessert, we were served a perfect "sericaia", typical of the Alentejo region, served not with the traditional preserve plum from Elvas, but with a silky smooth yogurt ice cream. The dessert was accompanied by a Quinta Nova Vintage Port 2013. Being more focused on Douro wines than

on Port wines, this represents their approach to a Single-Quinta Vintage Port. It displayed all the pungent fruitiness of a young vintage, but I found it unbalanced, with a sweetness that overwhelmed the acidity and that felt a bit cloying and one-dimensional. Still a lot of work to be done on this front, especially given the multitude of micro-terroirs in the Quinta, which enable the creation of elegant and balanced wines, as demonstrated by the reds.

For those who skipped the middle paragraphs (and I do not blame you), remember this name - Quinta Nova – and look for their top-tier reds, which are world-class wines. Buy them now and nurture them for a few years, and you will not regret it!



QUINTA NOVA

DE NOSSA SENHORA DO CARMO



GUEST CORNER ARTICLE

The Rare Wine Company and Vinhos Barbeito

A 20th Anniversary Celebration



Article and photos by Marco DeFreitas © December 2015

Introduction

It began in 1995 with a fax. Mannie Berk, owner of The Rare Wine Company, was searching for wines to shore up his inventory of older Madeiras. A visitation request was sent to Manuela Vasconcellos Barbeito de Freitas at Vinhos Barbeito. When Mannie arrived, he was met by Dona Manuela's son, Ricardo Freitas, and from there began a partnership that not only provided The Rare Wine Company a pipeline to older Madeiras, it also changed the future landscape of Madeira consumption in America.

The Partnership

The wines of Madeira were going through tough times, but Mannie felt a kinship with Ricardo, who, like him, had a belief in the wines and what they could eventually achieve in the marketplace. Ricardo's relationships on the island was key in acquiring hidden stashes of old wine, which eventually found their way into the hands of The Rare Wine Company's customers. While this was advantageous for the "already converted", what could be done for the consumer who knew little about Madeira and could not afford acquiring such precious bottles?

In an attempt to mold Madeira into a more mainstream beverage, Mannie and Ricardo set about the task of creating wines with an aged character at a cheaper price. Mannie would develop an idea for a particular wine and Ricardo would employ innovative blending techniques to achieve those ends. Older wines would be blended with newer. Tinta Negra Mole, which was less expensive and generally perceived as a "lowly" varietal, was treated with respect and carefully vinified. From this collaboration was born The Rare Wine Company's "Historic Series" of Madeiras. They were attractively packaged, produced in substantial quantities and provided quality above what was previously available at their price points. These wines sold well and placed Madeira on more wine store's shelves, providing a relatively affordable entry point for the consumer previously unacquainted with the genre.

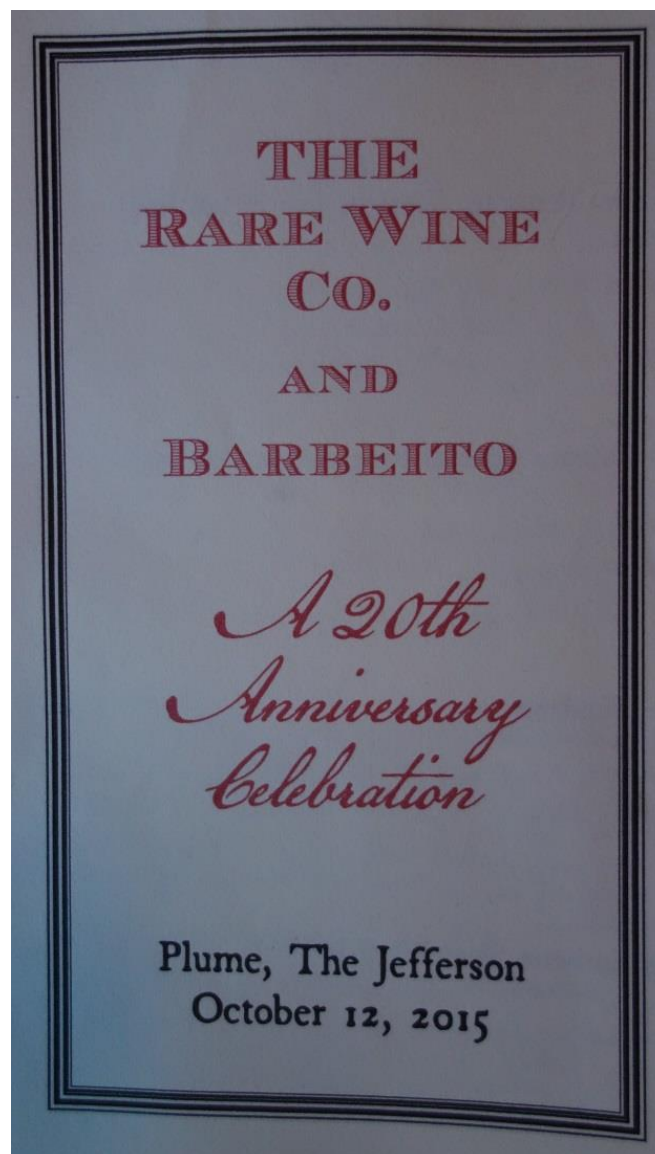


Photo with permission of Justin Ashourian © December 2015

The Celebration

With the realization last year that the twentieth anniversary of their partnership was at hand, both Mannie and Ricardo began planning a commemorative wine dinner to celebrate their two decades of collaboration. Several wines were chosen that held special meaning to Ricardo, some never before poured at any previous Rare Wine Company event. This affair eventually materialized in Washington DC, at the lavish Jefferson Hotel, well known for its extensive selections of Madeiras by the glass. Columbus Day was the chosen date ... a particularly appropriate day. Ricardo's grandfather, Mario Barbeito, founded Vinhos Barbeito and was always fascinated by Christopher Columbus, who lived for some years on the Madeira archipelago. Mario even established a Christopher Columbus museum on the island, but unfortunately it suffered severe damage during the devastating floods of 2010.

This commemorative dinner began with both Mannie and Ricardo recalling their first encounters. Aside from scrambling at the last minute to accommodate Mannie's vegetarian diet, Ricardo was shocked by the sheer quantity of wine that Mannie requested and recounted the logistics required to hand-bottle it all. Ricardo's mother was equally astonished at how much of her prized 1795 Terrantez, 1834 Malvasia, 1863 Bual, etc. were being sold. These are wines that early customers of the Rare Wine Company are well familiar with and surely lament their rarity in the marketplace today. The rise in prices of these wines, if they can be found at all, are indeed a testament to the increasing popularity of Madeira which can, at least in part, be attributed to that first fax in 1995.



The Wines

1992 Sercial

This was the first vintage (frasqueira) Madeira produced by Ricardo. I had previously tasted the trio of wines produced that year, which also included a Verdelho and a Boal, and while all were excellent, my favorite has always been the Sercial. This wine showed as well as it always had: bright, electric and citric with sharp but not austere acidity. Lots of treble notes here with lemons, honey and limes. I kept thinking to myself ... "Classic Sercial". This is a wine that encouraged Ricardo trust his instincts. Conventional wisdom states that you must have at least 9% potential alcohol in the grapes to produce quality Madeira, yet this only possessed 7%. Ricardo had faith in the wine and the results amply support his decision to vinify it. My only gripe is that I can only find it in 500ml bottles. **(92)**

Terrantez Reserve (bottled in 2000)

This was a bit sweeter than I normally associate with Terrantez, which I don't mind as long as the wine is balanced - and this is indeed well balanced. More bass notes here than on the 1992 Sercial that preceded it; a bit more caramel and toffee, but the acids are fine and smooth. It was tangy and rich with an ethereal quality that simply floats on the palate. This was a generous, silky and focused wine. **(93)**

New Orleans Special Reserve (1st Bottling from 2006)

When Mannie tasted a particularly extraordinary, yet limited, Terrantez from Ricardo, he tasked the winemaker with blending it to stretch quantities without diminishing quality. Fifty cases were eventually bottled and, according to Mannie, the taste is quite comparable to the original Terrantez; this was a wine that truly cemented Mannie's trust in Ricardo as a master blender. The eventual composition consisted of 25% Terrantez with some older Tinta Negra Mole blended in. This was my third taste of this wine over eight years and it was perhaps its best showing yet; simply thrilling, with incredible drive and thrust on the palate. Flamboyant nose, dryish and pleasingly bitter on the palate with spectacular length. An intense, complex, mouth-watering wine. **(95)**

The Wanderer

This was made from 100% Tinta Negra Mole of about 60 years of age and bottled in 2006. Having initially tasted this, Mannie pleaded with Ricardo to bottle it by itself without any blending. After bottling, Mannie admitted to finding it disappointing and boring and, I believe, never offered it for sale. Tonight he used this wine to refute the notion that Madeira does not change once it goes into bottle. According to him, it had indeed changed and transformed into something quite enjoyable. I found it to have an unique herbal bouquet. The palate was medium bodied with notes of citrus, old wood and furniture polish. There was a sourness on the finish that surprisingly was not off-putting. I liked this quite a bit, but didn't love it; certainly an interesting wine and well worth trying. **(89)**

1889 Verdelho

This was bottled in 1989 with a "Christopher Columbus" label; one hundred bottles were produced. Quite dark in color and medium dry; classic Verdelho sweetness level. What impresses here is the concentration without weight. You can almost feel the palate-staining dry extract in the mouth, yet the acidity is correct and provides adequate lift for all the richness. The length here is quite impressive as well. A superb wine in a muscular style. **(94)**

1912 Bual Quinta do Sao Joao

Produced from grapes grown on the Western side of Madeira, in Jardim do Mar; bottled around 2000. The appearance was a bit cloudy and the nose reticent. The palate offered up flavors of fruitcake, baking spices and white raisins. The mouthfeel was a bit soft and needed a bit more focus. This did get a bit better with time in the glass, but I found this outclassed by other wines poured next to it. **(88)**

1891 Bual Favila Ribeiro Real

This had been in demijohn since the 1960s and bottled 3 months ago; sourced from Ribeiro Real, a relatively large vineyard by Madeira standards. It seems as if I've been sampling an unusually large number of wines from Ribeiro Real of late and they have all been quite excellent, but this is perhaps the best yet. This is one for acid lovers; you can almost feel the acidity on

the nose, as strange as that seems. This is my style of Bual: rich, layered, pungent and intense, yet no heaviness whatsoever due to a truckload of lip-pursing acidity. The finish lingers for what seems like forever, with stinging acidity. Did I mention the acids? I almost wonder if there is too much acidity here (nah!). Bottled only 3 months ago, I suspect this will settle down and only become more harmonious with time. Loads of potential here. **(97)**

1866 Bual

This was a bit of a deceptive wine for me as it appeared a bit soft at first (perhaps due to tasting it after the electric 1891 Bual?). After settling in with this a bit, it eventually showed its true nature. It does seem a bit on the sweeter side with notes of figs, raisins, tropical fruits and orange marmalade – but the structure is there. This almost showed like a fine, sleek Malvasia. A lovely, spherical, symmetrical wine where nothing really pokes out. The finish was fine, detailed and precise. Nothing aggressive here, just pure class. **(95)**



1837 Bual

This was the first wine in the tasting that showed marked torrefaction. Browner notes here with fudge, caramel, coffee and autumnal spices. A deep wine with breadth of flavors: tobacco leaf, smoke, burnt sugar and lemon zest. A hint of volatile acidity - but not crossing the line to "varnish". A lovely wine for a cold winter's night. (94)

Malvasia 40 year old Mae Manuela

This was a bottling to pay tribute to Ricardo's mother, containing 7% of an 1880 Malvasia (which by itself is one of the finest Malvasias I've tasted). While 7% may not seem like a lot, it appears to have added remarkable depth. So fragrant, with wild botanicals and a cornucopia of dried tropical fruits. This exhibited correct sweetness and balance. This wine underscores my belief that Ricardo is making some of the finest Malvasias out there ... crisp, chiseled and filigreed Malvasias that are lifted, fresh and pure (the 30 year old Malvasia that Ricardo made in tribute to his grandfather shows a similar freshness and lightness of touch; definitely worth seeking out). Nothing syrupy here; a truly refined wine that showed better today than when I tried it on release. (96)

1955 Moscatel

According to Ricardo, this was probably bottled 15 years ago. It's always fun to try a Moscatel and this one is no different. Classic Moscatel notes of orange, tangerines, flowers and apricots. A lighter styled wine and a bit soft for my tastes. Enjoyable, but not a standout for me. (89)

1950 Malvasia Favilla Viera

I've had the fantastic 1920 Favilla Viera Malvasia a number of times and this 1950, which I've never tasted before, compares favorably. This has a dense core of honey, caramel, dried citrus fruits and brown butter. Clean, fresh tasting wine with a punchy, saline, saliva-inducing finish. Remarkable maturity for such a relative youngster. Absolutely delicious. (94)

1926 Malvasia Vasconcelos

Ricardo commented on the uniqueness of this wine, being fortified with sugar cane rum (although I didn't really pick up any overt rum notes). Overall, this was a lovely, well balanced, svelte Malvasia. Not a lot of power here, but lots of lime zest, sultana raisins and light rancio. Excellent wine. **(93)**

1900 Malvasia

A wine I know well, as it was one of the first serious Madeiras I purchased back when I first started collecting wines. I haven't had this for some time and forgot what a black hole of sugar this was. Dark like cola and stuffed with caramel, toffee, fruitcake, fudge and coffee. This was tremendously sweet with a hint of volatile acidity; the structure is just barely harnessing the sweetness here. This really sticks out in the Barbeito portfolio with its unusually aggressive sweetness. Certainly a polarizing wine, as some would surely find it too much of a good thing - but if you have a sweet tooth, this is for you. While I did enjoy it and can see this as a wine I would serve with dessert rather than by itself, I'm not sure I can drink more than a glass of this concentrated elixir. I can only imagine what could have been if it spent less time in cask. **(93)**

1882 Malvasia RR

Ricardo filled 177 bottles from demijohn in February of 2015. This was a group favorite the last time I had it, about six months ago, and it once again offered an impressive performance. This exhibited the more typical Barbeito restraint when it comes to Malvasia. Focused and precise, with figs, marmalade and tart lemons. While a sleek wine, there is no lack of power here. A pungent, tangy wine with outstanding attack, breadth and lift. This really fires off in all directions with head-spinning intensity. A deep, deep wine and a reference point for what Madeira can achieve. **(97)**

A PORTUGUESE PERSPECTIVE

Roy's Note: Diana Leão Costa lives in Porto and has a degree in architecture under her belt, and is currently studying viticulture and winemaking at Faculdade de Ciências da Universidade do Porto. Additionally, Diana has several years of experience selling Portuguese wine and especially Port products in her country. During the 2015 harvest, she worked as a "cellar rat" at Quinta do Crasto in the Douro. Earlier this year, Diana joined a small group of travelers to explore 5 distinct wine regions in the center of her country and had a great time. She kept a daily log and asked if we'd be interested in sharing her point of view for the benefit of future guests, or anyone interested in learning what one of our new tours is like. Diana also asked me to mention, that this is her first attempt to write an article in the English language.

My Impressions of the first "5 Regions Tour" in Portugal



Article by Diana Leão Costa © December 2015

When you are considering whether to join a wine tour, you're expecting an experience that will revolve around wine tasting and good food. Even though you might be surrounded by a lot of people, it's always a very personal experience, in my point of view. You expect to have some unforgettable sensorial moments and explore new places and new tastes. This was sincerely what I hoped to encounter as a starting point for this journey.

FTLOP's *5 REGIONS TOUR* was about joining our two co-hosts in their first effort to visit five distinctive wine regions in my own country, so I wasn't thinking about the charms of unknown landscapes, but I was intrigued by the fact that we had big references of Portuguese winemakers and also smaller companies on the menu. The reason for participating in this tour was personal. My intent was to gain further knowledge of Portuguese wine processes and their influence and some unique producers and the best of all, I was going to share this opportunity with an amazing friend. So this seemed to be the perfect way to have a great vacation.

Now, can you imagine doing all this exploration in a laid back way and instead of having endless winery visits, technical explanations about the process of wine making and quick tastings; instead you get to try many new flavors in cozy environments, with the producer present to explain their vision, treating you like an old friend due to the relationship with our hosts. So we were able to spend a relaxed time unraveling the mysteries of wine making without it being overly technical. So, can I summarize this tour in a word? Passion. Don't get me wrong, this is a cliché, for sure, but this is what I felt. Passion for wine alchemy.

I'm a young architect that at one point in my life found myself jobless with a lot of will to work and learn more. I wanted a job working only with Portuguese products ... it was not easy, given the local economy and lack of opportunities. I started working with wines and had wonderful clients from all over the world that looked to me to provide them with a little bit more understanding about the wines they tasted. So, my personal interest in it continued to grow and nowadays, part of my life revolves around wine.



5 REGIONS in a week, with many producers, a few legends and unexpected surprises.

The kick off of the tour took place in Coimbra, the former capital of Portugal, possessing the 2nd oldest University in all of Europe. We began with an informal lunch and had the opportunity to taste a few Vinho Verde and olive oil from Colinas de São Lourenço.



The first region on the itinerary was Bairrada, famous already for sparkling wine and roasted suckling pig, (*Leitão assado à Bairrada*), is now a very popular appellation with new and exciting wines. Crazy blends with a nice touch of acidity and minerality due to the combination of different grapes, soil and humidity. This region, now in vogue in Portugal, is a place of proud and focused winemakers, new companies and trendy ideas. The Baga grape is definitely this region's banner and although not fully supported by all the producers, there's a strong group of winemakers determined to continue the history of this variety of grape in the region.



I had no idea that Bairrada, which until fairly recently was an obscure region in Portugal, had such a diverse breadth of indigenous grapes and unique wines besides the well-known sparkling wine. These are no small producers anymore, these are new companies determined to be known in the international markets. Some of the production is now exported globally.

Our first visit was to Quinta do Encontro in São Lourenço do Bairro. The circular winery building (shaped like a wooden wine cask) stands out in the middle of the vineyards, which allows whoever is tasting to have a complete panoramic view of the property. It is difficult not to love this place. Though soft and approachable, these wines were unmistakably Bairrada. With a nice acidic basis, good chalky tannins and filled with beautiful aromas of plum, cherry and raspberry. Two grape varieties destined to make the difference in this region – Bical for the whites and Baga for the reds – due to their affinity to Bairrada soil types; chalky clay or clay and limestone. The first, white, fills the wine with nice exotic fruit but acidic flavors. The other, red, is responsible for dark fruit flavor with powerful tannins. These unique flavors are blended with other varieties in order for them to create and magnify a new identity for this region, mixed with tradition. Considering Portugal is becoming better known for its wine quality and diversity, there is no better timing for this creativity.

In the Bairrada you have a famous wine family – father and daughter – the Pato family. Crazy, in a good sense, when it comes to their winemaking ability. This name was no stranger to me, but this visit revealed to be an unbelievably fine experience.

First, Luís Pato. A gentleman when it comes to wine. Luis has come to a point in his life that he's not afraid to take risks, or take a wrong turn. Well, looking back at his wine life, he never was. Listening to him talking about his wine was a singular experience. He received us in a very relaxed way, which reveals the confidence to talk about his own work. Surprised nonetheless by this unusual group of wine lovers, he started revealing some of his secrets to us. His passion was quite evident and he is definitely a visionary and pioneer. Pato is deeply passionate about Baga. He made his first wine from this single variety in 1980. Unconventional in many ways, he destems Baga, uses ungrafted vines and makes two distinct harvests from one vineyard about a month apart. His wines are true to the region, but in no way old-fashioned.

We had the opportunity to taste a broad spectrum of wines from his portfolio – Maria Gomes was the first. A traditional method sparkling wine that owes its name to this particular grape as it represents 80% of its composition, but as it produces wines that can lack verve, it is blended with 20% of Sercialinho that provides the necessary acidity and freshness. This sparkling wine has its second fermentation in the bottle, in order to preserve its floral aroma.



From the same vineyard – Vinha Formal. Luís Pato creates a sparkling wine and an elegant regular white wine – a field blend of Touriga Nacional and Bical. The sparkling wine, Vinha Formal 2013, is the result of a month long first fermentation in second year wooden casks and then a secondary fermentation in the bottle for 9 months, (the minimum for Bairrada’s sparkling wines). Elegant notes of smoke and toast, ripe pineapple, figs and honey come to mind when you taste it. Vinha Formal 2013 the white wine, is composed from the later harvesting and is fermented and matured in oak casks during 8 months. It presents a very unique texture and aroma - a balance between the unctuousness while still showing the freshness of the fruit.

Being a Baga lover, Luis Pato created *Informal*, a sparkling wine made of 100% Baga, a sparkling wine with a *Pinot Noir* character, yet it is purely Baga from chalky clay soil. Harvested in the last week of August, these grapes reflect the soil with its *mineral (smoky) character* and omnipresent delicate taste of fresh raspberry. Even the color is quite distinct – a peachy salmon with a beautiful bead of bubbles.

Although this is an older wine company for the Bairrada region, the Pato family has always been at the forefront of the winemaking game and they ambitiously approach the global market. “8” is a wine created especially for the Asian market where there is a huge demand for the wines of Portuguese. 8 is a drier, much more intense wine made from 100% ungrafted Baga. A refined touch of Baga made for sensational markets with a curious label! An 8 and a bowtie. You choose.



So the love for wine runs in the family. Filipa Pato understood from a very young age that she was also driven by the family's passion, so she traveled around the world to learn about other wine traditions and techniques. Although she started in her father's company, Filipa now runs her own company and some vineyards at Óis do Bairro. Soon to open a brand new winery, we spent a few hours with her over an informal lunch not far from her home. Filipa shares the same simplicity as her father, adding to this her own irreverent and fun personality. Wines without makeup – is her personal *raison d'être*.

Nossa – is one of her white wines, a 100% Bical from clay and limestone soils – pure Óis do Bairro terroir driven, from 25 year old vineyards, delivering a salty caramel taste, with pear and bees wax. This beautiful wine is fermented and matured for 8 months in 500 liter casks, presented us with crisp acidity and a delicate hint of oxidation.

2011 Nossa – a classy red wine, is pure Baga without makeup, profound and aromatic, with fresh red fruit aromas, and exhibiting the influence of Atlantic minerality. Filipa Pato's main goal for her wine is to present the terroir, this wine is born of several Baga old vineyards from this region, fermented in a Roman style, with lagares and then matured for 18 months in 500 liter oak casks. This stage helps to balance the Baga's strong tannins.

Both appointments with members of the Pato family were memorable as we were inspired by their honesty and willingness to share their secrets with us. Informal and educational wine exploration at its best, with leading players from this renowned family. All the things I had hoped to achieve by coming along on this tour.



Campolargo was the third company we visited, and it is another family-owned operation intricately woven into the region's fabric and history. This is a huge company with 170 hectares of vineyards, most situated on the estate. The vineyards are composed of indigenous and international grape varieties. Within the reds: Baga, Touriga Nacional, Tinta Barroca, Pinot Noir, Trincadeira da Bairrada and Cabernet Sauvignon. The white varieties include: Bical, Arinto, Cerceal and Verdelho. This family business has a large portfolio adapting themselves to the international markets' demands, but still maintaining the region's tradition.

After touring the entire winemaking and storage facilities, the tasting took place during a beautiful sunset on the top floor of the main building, surrounded by vineyards, and was conducted by Joana Campolargo. The tasting kicked off with three mono-varietals- 100% Verdelho, 100% Bical and 100% Baga. The wines offered the full expression of the region's best feature – its terroir. Baga is the grape that stood out from the others due to the unique character of the Baga, which presented us with a rich, intense flavor of dark cherry and black currant but with a hint of almonds, evidence of the 12 months of wood aging.

On a completely different perspective, working with international grapes in this terroir is also challenging due to soil composition and the intricate climate of this region. *Calda Bordalesa*, a red wine made of a blend of Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot presents a completely different state of mind. True to French style wine the tasting notes are more of a dark fruit with dark chocolate, mint and solid tannins.



The complete surprise was a sparkling Pinot Noir – Rosé Brut. With a peach color and a delicate stream of small bubbles, this sparkling wine impresses for the elegant nose with hints of cotton candy, Earl Grey tea, limes and old rose. It is a strange combination and is unique, without a doubt. A perfect ending for this tasting!

But the tasting did not actually end there! During our stay in this amazing region we had the opportunity to lodge at Casa de Mogofores, part of the estate of the Campolargo family. This sumptuous and quiet home hides inside many beautiful rooms and an indoor swimming pool. Each night, at the dinner table we would taste again some of the wines we had tried at the winery, just as an exercise for the palate and for the head; paired beautifully with a home cooked dinner.



The second region we visited was Tejo, an unexplored region in terms of most international markets, but in Portugal it is considered on the cutting edge for new wine tastes and blends. Roy and Mario chose our visits judiciously and with a keen eye on some of the best winemakers and their fine wines. This region has undergone several changes in the last 15 years, dramatically improving the quality of wines and aiming exports at exclusive markets.



We first spent time at Casal da Coelheira winery, a well-kept secret in Tramagal near Abrantes, as we came to discover. A traditional producer that makes some excellent wines that were presented to us by the owner/winemaker, Nuno Rodrigues (in photo above). He is responsible for this small family-run business of three generations, including 64 hectares of vineyards most of it in sandy soils, and the majority of vines ungrafted due to the inexistence of phylloxera.

There is always a tendency to highlight what you like best, but it is impossible to forget how special we felt sharing the table with the winemaker and having him attentively listening to our judgement of his wines. His openness really made the difference for us as a group with such diverse wine visions. On top of that, this was an unknown producer for the guests, which added to the surprise of the high quality of wines in the lineup we were able to taste.

The white wines, Casal da Coelheira – White 2014 and White Reserve 2014 – although from completely different grape varieties, represented what the region does best – delicate flavors of fresh fruit, well-balanced with focused acidity leaving a fresh persistence on the mouth. This is the terroir working directly on the final product. The Rosé is no exception, made of 50% Shiraz and 50% Touriga Nacional, showing a nice touch of exotic fruit, watermelon and strawberry again with a pleasant acidity – absolutely unique. When it comes to the red wines each states a singular character. Casal da Coelheira Reserve 2014 is a blend of Touriga Nacional, Cabernet Sauvignon and Touriga Franca – it's an unexpected excellent red wine with a nice thick violet color and blackberry and black currant aromas, with a hint of dark chocolate, intense acidity and nicely framed tannins.



Mythos 2012 – a wine made only in exceptional vintages is produced from the same blend of grapes, but producing a much more complex wine than the Reserve 2014. It is a wine built to represent the terroir of Tejo where each variety of grape is fermented separately and the maturation occurs, up to 14 months in French (80%) and American (20%) oak barrels. It delivers a solid full-bodied red wine, with abundant tannins. Black currant and dark chocolate notes and in the mouth it goes from a sharp edge to an elegant style texture and profound taste. Mythos is a wine built to age for several years and a very nice surprise!

When we thought we had had enough for our morning tasting, not so fast, it was now lunch time and the winemaker brought us to enjoy a very special restaurant in Abrantes. I could describe the food which was delicious, but I'll just keep it a secret and say that the dessert was unbelievably good and quite nutritive.

After putting a coin on the wall for good luck and making sure it would not fall off, we set sail for another region, although we would revisit the Tejo again, later in the tour. It was certainly a great start to this little known gem.



Changing landscape yet again, we headed for the cork region and the golden plains of the Alentejo wine region. During our ride, we stopped along the way to explore the cork forests and later on, visited a massive cork plant, with many hectares of harvested cork bark that was seasoning before being ready for shipment to a production facility.



Pateo dos Solares in Estremoz was our resting point. A really classy hotel within the castle walls, with an outdoor garden where you can enjoy their swimming pool. I like a good swim whenever possible, so it was a real treat to be able to utilize this pool while staying at this nice property that is surrounded by the village and large historic castle too.

Alentejo comprises about 1/3 of Portugal's land mass, so it is huge and is known as the region for strongly flavored wines; let's call them *with a temper*, wines that require time to taste. These are mainly poor schist soils and reach higher temperatures during most of the summer months, and the hungry, stressed vines must search deep to find nutrients.

Our first appointment, Roy had previously been to this property and met the owner and tasted many of their wines and thought this was one we should not miss. João Portugal Ramos is one of the region's largest wine companies thanks to the area of vineyard managed by the group – 600 hectares. This company is the result of the work of João Portugal Ramos spanning the last 30 years and produces wine throughout the country, (including the Douro) yet it started in Estremoz in 1990. This is a family-run business with a well-built economic structure and a strong social responsibility, as most of the work is done by employees from within the region.

Starting our visit atop the walls of the existing Castle in Estremoz, from where most of the property can be seen, we're introduced to the company and to its vineyards. What a view! Funny fact, the vineyard right below the castle's walls at the entrance to the village is planted with Alicante Bouschet and Trincadeira, in alternating lines so when the leaves mature, one is still green, while the other one is strong red, coincidentally composing the colors of Portugal.



After we checked out the vineyards much closer, we visited the winery, the cellar and the beautiful marble lagares (yes, pure marble). Afterwards, we went to the first floor to take part in a grand tasting.

First in line is Pouca Roupa, Rosé – my favorite rosé wine during the Tour is a blend of Aragonez, Touriga Nacional and Cabernet Sauvignon, which was harvested during the night and laid to rest to guarantee the delicate extraction of color – a salmon hue. It has a fresh nose with hints of apple, peach and white melon and some minerality present due to the schist soil, a nice sweet taste, simple and clean.



Within the white wines, one prevailed in my attention, the Vila Santa Reserva 2013 – a blend of Arinto, Sauvignon Blanc, Alvarinho – a wine that's partially fermented in oak barrels with a tropical fruit aroma, notes of young honey and sweet lemon, nice structure and light acidity. Perfect!

Within the red wines, it is more difficult to choose a favorite, as we tasted many and they were all quite unique, but I can describe 3 that I found quite interesting. Vila Santa Reserve 2013 - a blend of Aragonez, Touriga Nacional, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Alicante Bouschet – is a partly foot trodden red wine, fermented in wooden vats and with a long post-fermentative maceration.

The aroma gives away the complexity this wine has, with hints of dark plum, black fruit blend and sandal wood and in the mouth you can feel the elegance of the tannins and a balancing acidity, finishing with a taste of unroasted almonds.

Quinta da Viçosa 2011 – a special wine made only when the quality of the wines is exceptional – a blend of Touriga Nacional and Cabernet Sauvignon that shows a dark currant color and a dark berry aroma mixed with notes of black pepperish chocolate and nice chewable tannins.

To end this amazing tasting we tasted their high end, Marquês de Borba Reserve 2012 - Deep in color. Excellent concentration of aromas. Notes of jammy red fruits and spices. Potent and elegant. Solid, vigorous, with compact and well integrated tannins and spices. Long and distinct finish. A wine for ageing. This is the official site's definition and I couldn't agree more. Sometimes it is best to stay on the simpler side of the critique.





In the end, some members of the executive team joined us, and we had the opportunity to meet with João Portugal Ramos. After introductions we enjoyed a nice lunch with some of our favorites from the tasting and a couple of older bottlings too. This might be irrelevant to someone else's eyes but for us it meant having the opportunity to dig deeper in the knowledge behind these powerful wines. After lunch we said goodbye to our hosts and departed for our next visit.

From one memorable moment to another. We headed up to Mouchão. Herdade do Mouchão, was a much anticipated visit for Roy, possibly the one place he was most looking forward to visit on our tour; but for me it was still an unknown. Well it shouldn't have been, considering the extraordinary quality of these wines and their worldwide presence and reputation.

David Marques Ferreira, the director of Mouchão welcomed us like old friends. Maybe that's not difficult for him as it is obvious that he loves what he does. Throughout the visit he showed us a sincere enthusiasm for this place and his work, which in the end his passion infected us as well.

Mouchão, a fertile land between two rivers, is owned by the Reynolds family (known to Roy and some Port lovers) and it is now part of the fourth generation. The company not only produces wine, it produces cork, excellent olive oil, honey and spirits too. But their wines are certainly unique, maybe because when it comes to wine production, everything is still the closest to traditional, no irrigation, hand picking and foot treading. Another interesting fact is that most of their red wines are quite tannic, therefore rest in wood, some up to 24 months, so they can be tamed and lose some of their aggressiveness.

It was a very warm late afternoon when we arrived and humid too, so while we walked to the vineyards it became extremely hot. David was proud of the vineyards and wanted to show us more, but to walk to the “Roman bridge” area was just too far given the temperature and we wanted to make sure we would have time for a proper tasting, of course.

When we arrived back at the winery, David showed us around the production areas and the rest of the building from the turn of the 20th century, including the distillery equipment. There was a lot to see, but he could tell we were very eager to try the wine lineup he had arranged for us.



The first wine on the table was a Dom Rafael White 2013. This a blend of Antão Vaz, Arinto, Perrum and Fernão Pires, being a very aromatic wine which offered notes of sweet flowers, a little bit of lime and meringue. Oaky flavors with a buttery feel to it. Quite distinct.

Their reds are equally impressive. Ponte das Canas is a red wine from 2011 made from Alicante Bouschet, Touriga Nacional, Touriga Franca and Shiraz. It's trodden and fermented in lagares aged in oak barrels and afterwards aged in bottle prior to release. This wine shows a dark rich color, an interesting complexity due to the dark fruit aromas with a touch of black pepper. It is persistent and spicy with chalky strong tannins.

Another one, unavoidable is the heralded Mouchão 2010. This is the company's best known label and strongest reference, as Roy called it, "a cult wine" here in Portugal. A truly complex wine with delicate balance between the dark black fruit blend and the hints of eucalyptus and pine, composed of a nice structure and persistence without being too heavy. Tannins built to last.

We also tasted Mouchão Licoroso 2009, a 100% Alicante Bouschet wine that can be described as a super intense plunge of sweet black fruits and licorice adding a little spiciness to this exotic dessert wine.

This nice tasting lasted till 9:30 pm as we were so involved in this cozy conversation sharing the love of wine and the experiences each one of us had, so I have to pinpoint this moment as one of the most memorable of our Tour.



Back to our hotel and later we walked around the town of Estremoz, before a late night dinner with excellent food and beer. After dinner another walk in the streets of the village, charming and picturesque, surround by the protective walls of the castle. It was warm and very quiet and we enjoyed this immensely, before heading back to our resting place for a good sleep.

The next day we headed in a different direction, actually another region. I love Portuguese fortified wines. The older, the better! Yes, I know, maybe another cliché. Every woman loves sweet things, so Moscatel (Muscat grape) is no exception. The Moscatel de Setúbal is one of the most praised fortified wines of Portugal, along with Port, Madeira and Carcavelos. This sweet wine is made from a very aromatic and sweet grape of the same name and it ages for a minimum of 2 years in what they call an "oxidative style" in oak to better shape the distinct aromas of the nectar.

Mario and Roy have introduced other guests to the producer we were about to visit. In Palmela there's a very small company that produces this sweet wine for the last three generations - Horácio Simões. Thanks to the stubbornness of the oldest generation in transforming this elite aged wine into something accessible for everyone, they now produce several Moscatel wines.

Maybe, I am showing too much love for Moscatel. But if you wish to say otherwise, you must taste it first. This is incredible! We had lunch at this property with the winemaker, a local friend of his and another family member. Lots of nice table wines were included and a couple of great Moscatels we had not tried, were served with dessert. We even got to meet the grandfather of the owner, who is approaching 100 years old and was so happy to meet us!



This small family-run business is known for its quality and they'll share with you their many vinous gifts and explaining how much I loved the tasting we did is no surprise. But I won't bother you describing all the wines we tasted, as it was an extensive selection. I'll just stick to the specific ones I just couldn't get enough of.

Moscatel de Setúbal – 10 Years Superior. This wine is not completely fermented. In order to preserve some of its sugar, brandy is added before the fermentation ends. Then it is laid to macerate during the 6 months of autumn and winter in contact with the grape skin. After that it is allowed to rest in wood barrels. The aromas that were once floral and fresh turned into orange peel and milk caramel, but still showing in the mouth hints of ripe exotic fruits with a caramel touch and an insinuation of wood. This 10 year old Moscatel, filled with all these crazy aromas is a full-bodied wine with a long persistence and sharp edged acidity which allows you to drink it lightly.



Excellent, is a blend of the best 3 years of the decade. This a family tradition as the 3 generations are involved in the choice of the best 225 liters barrels of it, in order to make this wine. 2001, 2003 and 2007 are the chosen wines to feature in this particular bottling. When you open this bottle you still get what characterizes the Moscatel grape mixed with other aromas of aged Moscatel such as dried apricot, orange peel and

cream caramel, while in the mouth you get similar flavors, but with a more refined presentation of orange marmalade, a touch of cinnamon, crème brûlée, almonds and apricot with a gentle hint of mahogany. It has nice acidity that balances out the strong sweet flavors.

Next up was an afternoon visit to the legendary José Maria da Fonseca the best-known producer of Moscatel de Setúbal. This company shows the difference between it and the tiny producer we visited earlier in the day. José Maria da Fonseca is a completely different size from the previous one, even though it is still a 100% family-run business, now in its 6th generation with almost 2 centuries of history. They own the oldest winery in Portugal, working since 1834 and present an impressively deep portfolio of table wines and fortified wine, in which it included the exemplary Periquita – the oldest brand of table wine in all of Portugal ... and it remains in production today, nearly 160 years after its inception. Moreover, most notably this producer has a national and international reputation for its iconic and highly sought after selection of Moscatel de Setúbal.



Our visit to JMdF's Manor House was guided by António Maria Soares Franco, the eldest of the 6th generation. Their estate in the middle of Azeitão is still where most wines are produced and aged. It is also where the family jewels are kept. The unicorn wine known as "Torna Viagem" (which translates to "round trip") for example, is a very special Moscatel that results from an idea that José Maria da Fonseca had to increase its sales. Shipping this wine in the old vessels that traded in India, Africa and Brazil, José Maria da Fonseca hoped to expand his business. The wine that would return on the ship, unpurchased, had already endured hot temperatures and the humidity of the tropics and crossing of the equator and therefore had refined its character. The company re-created this process on a second voyage, in 2000.

The JMdF portfolio is as diverse as it is extensive, but we focused mainly on the Moscatels, nonetheless, I would like to outline one of the red non-fortified wines we tasted that excelled by its quality – *Hexagon 2008: Six Sides, six Grapes and six Generations: Foot-trodden and fermented with full skin contact, this wine remained in oak casks for 3 months during the battonage and then aged for 12 months in French oak casks. It presents itself with a blackberry aroma, notes of sweet spices, fresh vanilla and black chocolate. High acidity and chalky tannins. Long length, but rather dry. A lovely surprise.*

Now for the Moscatels – Moscatel Roxo 2005 – belonging to their private collection - has been launched in 2014 and has spent those 9 years aging in oak – it has a beautiful color without too much oxidation and a refined palate. Cinnamon bread, caramel and sugar cane notes showing a light acidity and medium length. Delicate and perfect for the beginning of a meal.

20 Year Old Moscatel Roxo - is also a pleasant surprise – having a nicely structured frame, light and crisp acidity and loads of persistence. It offers beautiful notes of crème brûlée, caramel, tobacco and hazelnuts. Coffee foam and cinnamon. Excellent!

Then came the amazing *Trilogia*, a very special wine released in 1999 celebrating the turn of the century and the millennium. It is the top Moscatel available for sale at the winery today; and is a blend of 3 special vintages – 1900, 1934 and 1965, the winemaker's choice of three great vintages of the company's Moscatel de Setúbal production. This limited edition is a complex mix of flavors such as dried figs and dried bitter orange with spiciness to it. Perfect acidity with a nice unctuousness and long persistence. The guests and both of our hosts were loving this wine! Roy and Mario had brought another group here the previous month and Roy told us he first visited here in 1994, before he even visited Porto or Douro for the very first time!



To end this perfect day we drove up to Quinta da Lapa, a beautiful estate with 300 years of history, but it was fully restored at the beginning of the decade and is now replete with 21st century amenities and comfort. Wonderful, natural and peaceful. In the middle of vineyards and corn fields, lays the main house developed around a huge square patio, as it is traditionally built. Each room is named after a Portuguese grape variety and many of the guest rooms possess a huge balcony suspended above the gardens. Here you can enjoy a perfect sunset and relax, with a glass of wine, of course!

So we are now back again in the Tejo region, although this venue offers a completely different landscape, surrounded by lots of open land, high mountains and slopes. Here you feel the wind and the temperature changing during the day. Lapa itself is situated in a very quiet part of the region and you feel like you are really on vacation while here in a luxurious, laid back and relaxing environment. We all had a casual wine dinner and discussed our day and the unique furnishings in our rooms. The food was very good and service was like being at the table with relatives. Love it here!

A new day, and after a light breakfast, we head out to visit friends of Roy's and Mario's. In the middle of nowhere, probably is what I should say, lays this unbelievably well-disguised wine property. Quinta de Chocapalha is owned by the parents of renowned winemaker, Sandra Tavares da Silva's family. Sandra's name in the oenology world is a well-known quantity with a sterling reputation; as she makes wine not only for her parents at Quinta Chocapalha, but was the long time winemaker alongside Cristiano van Zeller at Quinta do Vale D. Maria and remains a consulting oenologist there, but may be best known for her wine project in partnership with her winemaking husband Jorge Serodio Borges at Wine and Soul in the heart of the Douro Valley.

While Quinta de Chocapalha is a property that was unknown to me, (I trust Roy and Mario to only take us to places that are worthy of our time and exploration) for two reasons it should not be unknown – both the fact of who the winemaker is and the realization that the winery was designed by a well-known architecture firm, Herzog and Meuron.

The Chocapalha estate, bought by Sandra's charming and engaging parents, Paulo and Alice, in the 1980's, belonged previously to João Portugal Ramos's family and it dates back to the 16th century. The sandy soil and low production of the 45 hectares planted to vines, led to the need for major re-grafting in the vineyards and some block planting necessary to adequately improve the land in order to meet their desired level of production. Their first bottled vintage was 2000.



This took not only time but also a lot of love, sweat and determination from the owners. In fact, these are the exact same feelings you see in Paulo and Alice's eyes, even today. The ambience here doesn't feel like "a company", as this is a family home and the winery is run by the family and for the family. You're a guest first and foremost and you immediately feel like you are spending time with long lost friends and you will enjoy every moment of it in the company of the founders. It just doesn't get any better than this.

Once you are introduced to more of the estate, you discover a beautifully designed building that extends itself along the slope. Contoured in a simple line. Damn. I fell in love. The winery is a beautifully designed building that extends itself deep into the mountain. Like a vertical cut. Conceived according to Sandra's layout and designed by João Pedro Serôdio and Herzon & Meuron, this is a fabulous architectural achievement, and it is a very practical building with loads of space, the scale of which is perfect. Here you don't feel the discomfort of high ceilings or cluttered spaces. Very inspiring for this architecture admirer!

The tasting, done at the family table, next to the inviting poolside blew us away. One of the things that amazed me and it is an honest personal opinion, was the different facets to the flavors found in Chocapalha's Arinto, (a popular white indigenous Portuguese grape). I found distinct differences in Arinto throughout all of the 5 regions, varying from distinct mineral tastes, and ranging from citric to floral aromas and achieving several unique viscosities. I still find this variety one of the most captivating and something that impressed me during the tour and had me thinking about this grape, even weeks later.

So I'll start off with one of Chocapalha 100% Arinto from 2014. A refreshing wine with a citric edge, notes of lemon leaf, acacia flowers and dried pineapple adding a nice white tea essence. The acidity gives this wine a nice freshness to it and the aromas linger in your mouth. For a 100% Arinto, this seemed a nice disclosure and a delicious way to start our tasting.

The family's portfolio has several wonderful white wines. Fresh and unique aromatics exist in all of them. But I turn the focus now on the red ones. Two special red wines in a lineup with many fine Tintos. My favorites were the Vinha Mãe and CH. Vinha Mãe 2011 – a blend from a very special vineyard where you have Touriga Nacional and Shiraz combining to produce a mixture of dark fruits such as cassis and currant, chocolate and black pepper. Gentle and refined tannins and a high acidity delivering a desirable persistence.



CH 2011 – This blend which celebrates Alice’s Swiss origin is a 100% Touriga Nacional from a special terroir. It ferments in granite lagares and matures in French oak barrels for 24 months. The beautiful aroma of black fruits blends with chocolate, violet and a distinct peppery quality. This is a very tannic young wine, loaded with aging potential and with a medium body weight and a long persistent aftertaste.



Alice and Paulo’s love for this place is evident and their kindness is impossible to forget, which adds to the warm feeling we had for Quinta de Chocapalha. In Alice’s words, “the wine should be born already, not blended.” They try to make the closest possible.

We had so much fun and a great lunch at this property which stands out in my fond memories of our visit here. The 10 wines and a Port we tasted were wonderful, but I will never forget the kind hospitality of our hosts!



It was time to explore yet another wine region and this property Quinta do Pinto belonged to the nearby Lisbon region. Roy had spent time here meeting the family and winemaker, Rita Cardoso Pinto back in 2011 and told us that we were going to have a lot of fun here with her sister, Ana Cardoso Pinto that Roy met last year in Seattle at a Vinhos do Portugal event. It is a place you must not miss near Alenquer, with westerly wind and gentle slopes, cold winds from the Atlantic and long maturations. A place of sustainable organization, and the family is fiercely proud of it.

Deep roots grow from this Quinta into the region's tradition. This beautiful estate – Quinta do Anjo - shown to us enthusiastically by Ana, has 120 ha, 53 of it planted with several grape varieties that show the characteristics of the Rhône region of France. There are another 10 ha more with native Portuguese varieties. Quinta do Pinto's wines have a defined profile that makes them unique. Creamy, fresh, sumptuous, silky and smooth mouth presence. Their goal - *disseminate international varieties that express differently in their property's terroir* – taken directly from their website.



After a quick intro, Ana took us on a wild ride throughout their property's hilly vineyards and this was a lot of fun and laughs. Afterwards she showed us around the entire winery and quinta along with a detailed tour of the extensive cellar. Ana was a great and lively personality and we sat on the balcony of this impressive family home where you feel the atmosphere of comfort and relaxation, made even better by Ana's personality. Now, it was time to drink some of Pinto's nice wine selections, of which there are many. Roy and Mario narrowed down the lineup with Ana, so we would finish before the moon came out.

I'll start off with an amazing white wine, a group favorite and one of the best we'd had to this point in the trip! Quinta do Pinto 2013. Viognier blended with Chardonnay aged for 6 months in oak cask. The first image that comes to mind, although it may sound strange, is uncooked lemon cake. This wine presents a beautiful creamy texture with high acidity giving it a fresh vibrancy mixed with gentle minerality ending with a salty lemon cream taste that lingers and then some.

The expression of the terroir is indeed special and you can notice that in the red varieties as well. Terras do Anjo 2012 is lovely, a mixture in equal parts of Touriga Nacional, Castelão and Syrah. Surprising for the fine blend of dark fruits, prunes, chocolate and pepper, yes, quite familiar aromas for sure, but add to all this the salty flavor of the land, a little bit of olives. This is a complex wine with ripe tannins and an elegant body. In the end you'll find a bit of herbaceous finish which I liked and was quite refreshing. In Ana's words, "this wine is from a year where you can find a more feminine side of the Touriga Nacional." And it showed!

Which brings me to another wine from the same year but 100% Touriga Nacional. Quinta do Pinto – Touriga Nacional 2012. Again you can find a black fruit blend mixed with violets and an earthy nose. Similar to a Burgundian wine, this one is profound and complex and chewable. Very young and power packed tannins and showing long persistence in the mouth. And even though this blend spends 12 months in French oak, its presence it is still quite subtle. Wow, this was really a beautiful baby wine with many years of good drinking ahead.





While we did get to taste a bunch of other wines, Ana's kindness and knowledge of the terroir, the soil, the grapes and even architecture was so much fun to be around. We had a nice discussion as we both studied architecture in University and now find ourselves involved with wine. This is a property that I want to visit again and taste more of the diamonds here.

It was getting late, so we had to go before it got too dark out. We went back to the hotel at the wine property *Quinta de Nossa Senhora da Conceição da Lapa*, (which dates back to 1733) and is located in the highlands north of the Tejo River. I was very happy we would be staying here another night, it is such a calming influence and a gorgeously appointed hotel property ... with great food & wine! We just had time to refresh and change before dinner was to be served. We were all hungry and looking forward to a special meal. We drank many fine wines, some that Ana gave us to enjoy with dinner as well as a couple from Lapa too. By the time we finished it was very late and sadly, the next day was the last full day of the tour. I didn't want the fun to end yet!

I woke up and the sun was shining in my window with an incredible view of the surrounding vineyards. I just enjoyed laying there and thinking back to all of the great moments we had experienced so far. Lapa was so relaxing and I would like to say that here I really felt at home, though this beautiful house was so big, but at the same time enjoyable, peaceful and happy.



On our last day, the winemaker and his wife took us on a tour of the vineyards and we got out of the vehicles and learned a lot about some of their grapes and the history of the property and the views were beautiful. We passed by the swimming pool, but it was nearly time for lunch and we had a big tasting ahead of us too.

We had the pleasure of enjoying a delicious meal, cooked for us by the two lovely ladies that took care of the house, along with the owner of the estate and his young and enthusiastic winemaker. Roy and Mario had never met the father of Silvia who runs this quinta and things started out a little bit formal but that did not last long.

Their vineyards are still quite young and still have a lot to prove, but that doesn't stop the owner from dreaming of getting even more land to plant more vineyard. But the estate is already impressive, (as we a chance to see the entire property from the top of the observation tower) and yet transmits a familiar feeling of still being tamable.

I have not written much about Rosé wines, as I'm typically not a big enthusiast of Rosé, but in this case I enjoyed Quinta da Lapa Rosé Selection 2014. This blend of Merlot and Touriga Nacional presented a beautiful copper color and impressed with watermelon and quince aromas, a nice unctuousness and neat freshness. It lingers long and delicately in the mouth.

Most of the time the wines are not only compositions and blends, they are also stories. "Nana" is one of the best wines produced by this Quinta that honors the owner's wife – Nana. This wine is for sure a perfect homage. The Nana reserve 2010, is an elegant combination of Trincadeira, Castelão, Shiraz, Merlot and Touriga Nacional where the black fruits aromas are mixed with dark chocolate ones and a light hint of mint. This wine has a sexy feeling to it, a nice unctuousity, velvety texture and a nice body with ripe tannins. Loved it and so did our entire group. It is one of the best wines we had the whole week. Even Roy was impressed with this particular bottling.

This was one of the most wide ranging tastings of the tour and a great way to finish it off, as we tasted for several hours around our great lunch. Quinta da Lapa has a remarkable portfolio and it still has a lot to show in the future. Roy had tasted many of their earlier vintages before and said he noticed a significant improvement in the four years since he last visited here. Although the wines that I mentioned in this article are for the majority, blends of Portuguese varieties, I'm still amazed to see the adaptation of international grape types on Portuguese soil.

One notable example is a red wine, Quinta da Lapa Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2012. It is a curious wine showing off a beautiful color and delicate aromas of black cassis, pepper and pine resin with a nice subtle touch of oak. Elegant tannins, a nice body and excellent length. A wine that resembles a Napa Valley style. Very impressive!



This was a perfect ending to our amazing Tour – tasting the best of the wines Quinta da Lapa has to offer and paired so nicely with our meal. Enjoying this with our group – now all good friends, along with Lapa’s owner and winemaker and his wife ... made our last day nostalgic.

5 Regions, 8 days, many tastings and unbelievable memories. When I decided to join this Tour after speaking to Roy, I wasn’t expecting this experience where it is not only the palates that matter, but all the stories behind the scenes and the people that share them. The confidence that you can return again to these places and people will be impatient to share what’s new and show you with immense pride the results of their hard work. This is what makes wine and this tour, so special for me.

Although I had met Roy a few years ago in Porto, and met Mario for only the second time on this trip, I still did not know what the chemistry of a Tour would be like with a small group of wine lovers from other countries and it surprised me in so many ways. For the will and pleasure of every owner/producer/employee to show the results of their hard work and exceptionally warm hospitality; for the relaxed and unpretentious tastings we enjoyed, for the complicity with our fun loving group and caring co-hosts who taught us so much about the regions we visited and added a lot of commentary to the wines we explored, and for the many invitations we received to come back again. I can’t wait to do this again someday. It was an experience I’ll never forget.

For the wines for sure, we got to taste some of Portugal’s jewels, so to speak, and taste so many different styles and profiles of wines in such a short period of time, but strategically chosen to give you a full view of the existing palette of wines in this country. So, can I repeat the cliché again? – Passion – this is the best word to describe this amazing experience. Passion for what you do. It is hard for me to understand how this was only the first time our co-hosts ever did this tour. They knew so many of the people we visited and picked great places for us to go, to stay at wonderfully comfortable hotels and quintas and the restaurants were all so unique, some simple, some so very high end, but not with an attitude.

If you’re into Portuguese wines and you would love to see other flavors in a very relaxed way, this tour is without a doubt an incredible opportunity. And believe me, forget the fancy clothes and shoes and save a lot of space to take wine back home. Some of these wines are still unknown outside of Portugal and in a few years’ time you will be glad you have them in your cellar. Your friends will be jealous. Last of all, taking a wine vacation, a “tour” in my own country was something that seemed that it could be good, and maybe not so good, or ... even great. Outside of Mario, I was the only Portuguese person in the group. But I left at the end, feeling very proud of what my country is able to produce, the treatment we got and the new friends that I made and that I will know for my whole life.

An alphabetical listing of wineries we visited during 2015 *Five Regions Tour*:

*** ALENTEJO Wine Region:**

- > Herdade do Mouchão - <http://mouchao.pt/>
- > João Portugal Ramos - www.jportugalramos.com

*** BAIRRADA Wine Region:**

- > Colinas de São Lourenço - www.idealdrinks.com
- > Filipa Pato - www.filipapato.net
- > Luís Pato - www.luispato.com
- > Quinta do Encontro - www.quintadoencontro.pt

*** LISBOA Wine Region:**

- > Quinta da Chocapalha - www.wonderfulland.com/chocapalha/
- > Quinta do Pinto - www.quintadopinto.pt/

*** SETUBAL Peninsula Wine Region:**

- > Horácio Simões - www.horaciosimoes.com
- > José Maria da Fonseca - www.jmf.pt

*** TEJO Wine Region:**

- > Casal da Coelheira - www.casaldacoelheira.pt
- > Quinta da Lapa - www.quintadalapa-wines.com

Written by Diana Leão Costa, December 2015. Some photos were mine, others offered by Roy.

FTLOP ANNOUNCES

2016 PORTUGAL WINE TOURS



THE 2016 TOUR DATES

FORTIFICATION TOUR – MAY 15 – 22

FIVE REGIONS TOUR – JUNE 12 – 19

PORT HARVEST TOUR 1 – SEPTEMBER 11 – 18

PORT HARVEST TOUR 2 – SEPTEMBER 18 – 25 **SOLD OUT**

PORT HARVEST TOUR 2+ – SEPTEMBER 25 – OCTOBER 2

2016 represents our twelfth consecutive year of guiding captivating oeno-tours and creating fun and highly educational programs in Portugal. *Experience* matters when it comes to providing our guests with bespoke vacations in our areas of expertise: Port, Madeira, Setubal and Vinho Verde. Each year we have managed to under-promise and over-deliver, to the delight of our guests, who bring their lofty expectations and depart Portugal simply amazed at how we continue to raise the bar every single year.



Having developed a loyal following amongst our guests, (>30% of our annual guests are repeat clients, since year one) and extraordinary industry relationships within the aforementioned regions, last year we ventured out to explore five new wine regions throughout Central Portugal. This year we plan to add the Dão region to our repertoire.

There's a reason that one of our 2016 tours sold out in November (2015) before we even had any idea where we're going to visit and two other tours are already at least half way filled up ... before tour dates had ever been made public. Simply put, it boils down to **trust** and **experience**. Our guests know that *nobody does it better*. It remains our greatest challenge to continuously find ways to keep these tours fresh and exciting!

For our 5 Regions Tour to be $\frac{3}{4}$ full at this stage of the year, after only one tour under our belt is astounding to both Mario and me and tells us we must be doing something right. By the time we all land in Portugal next summer, this tour will truly be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and a remarkable vacation for our dozen guests. We can't wait!

If it sounds like you would like to learn more, or want to jump on board and reserve a place early on, please feel free to email me: roy@fortheloveofport.com

Our updated travel page will "go live" with full info on the **2016** tours included as of Tuesday, December 29th 2015.

<http://www.fortheloveofport.com/love-port-tours-2016/>

PORTRAIT OF PORTO

In 2016, we will accept digital photographic submissions from readers for this section. If you'd like to see your best Porto-centric digital photo appear in FTLOP, please send it in .jpg format attached to your email and insert "PORTrait of Port" in the subject line. It is a **requirement** to include: your name, city & country as well as a short caption for the photo, (10 words or less) in the body of your email. Please send your email to: Roy@fortheLoveofPort.com



STUDENTS ENTERTAINING PASSERSBY WITH CLASSICAL FADO - Roy Hersh © December 2015

FTLOP FEATURE ARTICLE

The Majesty of Malvasia



Article and photos by Roy Hersh © December 2015

This was our 4th consecutive year of exploring the various cultivars of Madeira. Having previously surveyed Terrantez, Verdelho and Boal grapes, the natural progression from dry to sweet, led us to the marvelous Malvasia grape. The perfect ambience, spacious banquet room, excellent food and service staff at NYC's **Del Posto** restaurant, has continued to deliver on all cylinders so we were pleased to return to this fine establishment for this event. The selection of quintessential bottlings was seemingly more difficult this year, in part due to the fact that great old Malmsey is more prevalent than some of the other grape varieties, providing an abundance of old bottlings to choose from.

While red wine enthusiasts and collectors in the US often start out with California Cabernet and may gradually further explore powerful wines such as Aussie Shiraz, Chateaufeuf du Pape and Claret; as palates evolve, aficionados often gravitate to more intricate wines like Rioja, Barolo and/or Burgundy.

It is my belief that a similar dynamic occurs with Madeira. Consumers often initially approach Madeira from Malvasia's suave style, rich and concentrated in its sweetness. Over time however, that early sweet tooth evolves and I've noticed that many long time Madeira devotees tend towards the drier spectrum of Madeira such as Sercial, Verdelho, and Terrantez. But regardless of dry or sweet, there is a lot to love in each type and as long as the wine is balanced, it will deliver extraordinary allure.

While my palate preference clearly tends toward the ethereal complexity delivered by the Terrantez grape, I can't remember ever saying no to a fine bottle of Malmsey. While sweet, the best examples of the Malvasia grape always maintain a strong sense of acid balance too. And honestly, who doesn't like to sit back and sip a rich and hedonistic glass of Malmsey after dinner or later at night?

Mannie Berk, renowned owner of The Rare Wine Company in Sonoma, is the finest source for old and ancient Madeira within the United States. But beyond bringing beautiful bottlings of great Madeira into the country, his encyclopedic knowledge of the history and wines of the island is arguably the most extensive in the world today. It was an extraordinary pleasure to collaborate with Mannie again, co-hosting another once-in-a-lifetime Madeira party for our guests.

The Majesty of Malvasia tasting took place on Saturday, April 11th 2015. We had a stellar lineup of 20 unique bottles, the youngest of which was bottled only a couple of months prior to our event, but was vinified in the vintage of 1882. Coincidentally, that was exactly a decade after the scourge of Phylloxera first ravaged the island's vineyards. Mentioned here are some of the great Malvasia vintages that were featured in our flights based on their excellence and historic importance: a trio of 1880 and 1875s, and a dynamic duo from the phenomenal 1830 vintage, along with a rare pairing of Soleras from 1808. These special vintages made up half of our tasting.

The guests list comprised some of the world's most notable Madeira collectors, from both sides of the pond, but mostly from the US and UK. Their bottles were shipped ahead of time to facilitate proper decanting of the “*old-in-bottle*” Madeiras; compared to others that were also from ancient vintages, but fully matured in cask then bottled far more recently. The “*old-in-bottle*” Madeiras were vinified and often bottled after a few decades developing in cask, (with exceptions that were bottled later) then spent their remaining years in demijohn, bottle, (or both) some for a century or more. The “*old-in-bottle*” contributions to the tasting required as much as a week, or slightly more, of decanting prior to the event so they could recover from their “bottle sickness”. Reintroducing oxygen, by leaving the wines in open decanters allowed the bottle funk to blow off and the Madeira to evolve over time, enabling aromatic and flavor components to regain expressiveness. Fortunately, provenance of the bottles was beyond reproach, but with bottles this old, there is never a guarantee how they'll show.

Mannie and I arrived early Saturday morning in order to coordinate the final arrangements with Del Posto's excellent management and service staff. The bottles were lined up and we also discussed the dinner wines that would follow the main event. First the placemats were set on the table, (thanks to Julian Wiseman's creative wine placemat software: www.jdawiseman.com/placemat.html). Four hundred glasses were required for the Madeiras and the staff began arranging the glassware into their circles on the placemats, then pouring the contents of the Malvasias. Within minutes, the room smelled like liquefied toffee and as guests arrived, it was apparent they were eager to begin.

Given the two Soleras included in our lineup, it is difficult to pin down the exact age for those wines. However, it's safe to say that these twenty Malvasia bottlings had an average age of more than 160 years per, with a combined age exceeding 3,200 years. We were grateful to experience such an exceptional lineup of historic and rare bottlings of Malvasia. It was time for us to be seated.





The Participants

Justin Ashourian – Florida

Mannie Berk – Connecticut

Bob Cunningham – New York

Paul Day – UK

Marco DeFreitas – Connecticut

Ricardo Diogo Freitas – Madeira

Roy Hersh – Washington

Eric Ifune – Nevada

Stuart Leaf – New York

Mark Lee – California

Bob Maliner – Florida

Richard Mayson – UK

Kevin Mendik – Massachusetts

Aaron Nix-Gomez – District of Columbia

Steve Pollack – California

Jens Quistgaard – Washington

David Spriggs – California

Bob Stern – Pennsylvania

Ilya Strebulaev – California

Edwin Vos – Netherlands



The following three pages were extracted from *Madeira, the Islands and their Wines* © by Richard Mayson; (with permission) published by Infinite Ideas earlier in 2015.

Malvasia / Malmsey

Undoubtedly the best known and most highly prized of all Madeira's wines, the name 'Malvasia' (and its English corruption 'Malmsey') is in fact an umbrella for a number of different and probably unrelated grape varieties.

Historically, much the most sought after variety on Madeira is **Malvasia Cândida**. Recent DNA profiling has revealed that this is the same as Malvasia di Lipari, grown in Italy, Greece, Spain and Croatia. Its origin is uncertain but Malvasia Cândida was supposedly brought to Madeira from Crete (Candia) in the fifteenth century either by Venetian traders or, some say, by the Infante Dom Henrique (Prince Henry the Navigator) himself.

Malvasia (Cândida) has always been in very short supply. In 1530 an Italian named Giulio Landi stated that the Madeira produces a large quantity of wines of all kinds...as well as Malmsey, but in lesser quantities which is reputed to be better than that from Candia'. William Bolton, writing to a wine merchant in 1709 complains about the lack of Malmsey: '...we likewise observe yr (sic) order to us of 6 hogsheads of rich Malmsey, which, at present is not to be had in the whole island...' During the boom years of the second half of the eighteenth century Francis Newton (erstwhile partner in Cossart Gordon) wrote frequently to his London partners lamenting the lack of Malvasia wine. In 1841, Paulo Perestrelo de Câmara wrote '...the best Malmsey grapes make only 200 pipes a year. This fabulous nectar, with its mellifluous flavour, has the pungent aroma of a posy of sweet-smelling flowers. This precious beverage is ready to drink after eight years, but is better left longer, but even only at a year old is agreeable, giving off its perfume and full flavour of the grape.'

Decimated by *oidium* and not widely replanted after phylloxera, by the mid-twentieth century Malvasia Cândida was almost extinct. It is very difficult to grow with production varying alarmingly from year to year. My brother-in-law, Andrew Blandy, planted Malvasia Cândida at Quinta de Santa Luzia in Funchal in 2005 but found it so tetchy and difficult to grow that he regrafted it less than ten years later to Malvasia Fina (Boal). Malvasia Cândida is very prone to attack by oidium and needs a well-exposed site at low altitudes to flourish. It also needs to be trained on *latadas* (low pergolas) as it should be pruned with at least eight buds to produce a commercial crop. It is subject to apical growth with the flowering tending to be towards the end of the cane.

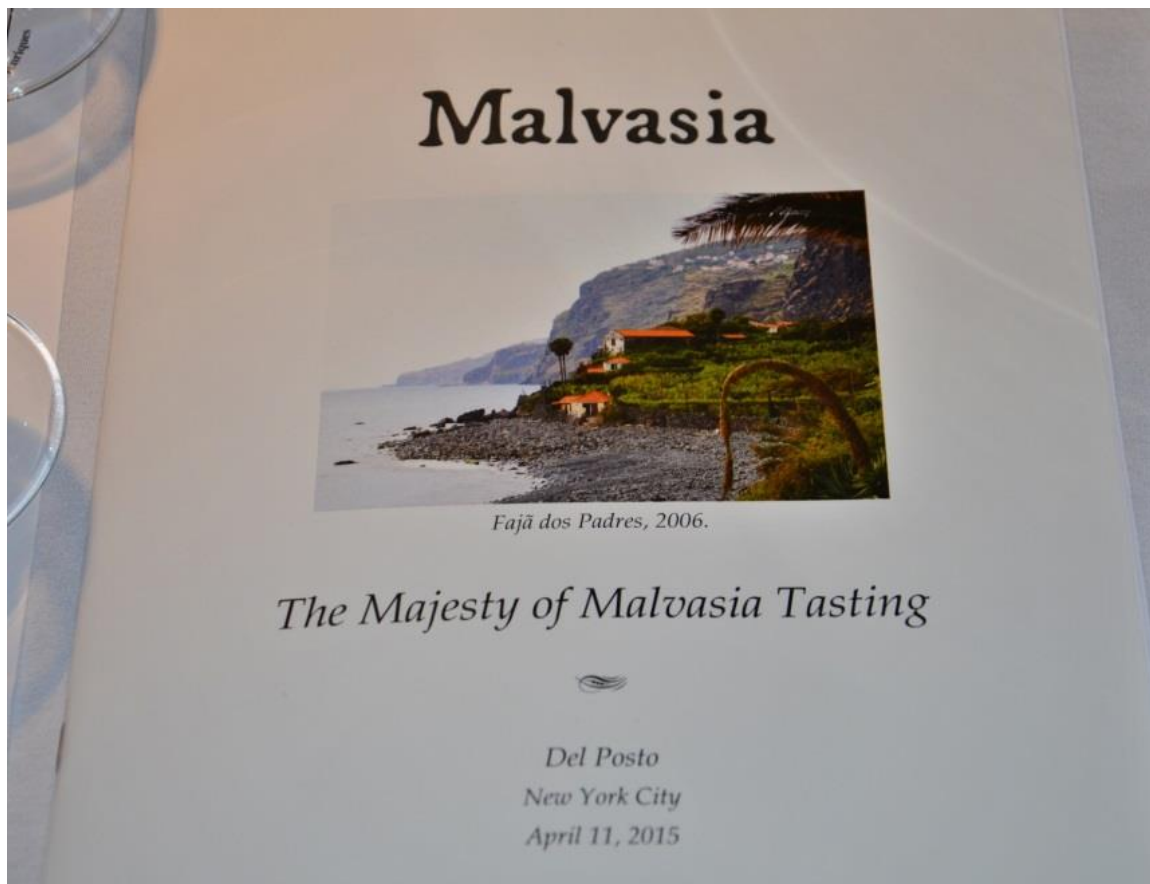
Traditionally Malvasia Cândida grapes were only picked when they began to shrivel or raisinize on the on the vine, so concentrating the natural sugars to produce the sweetest and most concentrated of wines. According to the most recent records only 4ha of Malvasia Cândida is currently grown on Madeira at Jardim do Mar and on Fajã dos Padres, both at sea level on the south side of the island, as well as in the Government's experimental vineyards.

Nearly all madeira wine bottled under the name Malvasia / Malmsey is in fact made from a grape known locally as Malvasia de São Jorge. Until 2015 Malvasia de São Jorge was no more than 'authorised' by IVBAM (Instituto do Vinho, Bordado e Artesanato da Madeira) but under the legislation published on 13th February this year it has been promoted to 'recommended'. Malvasia de São Jorge is a modern variety that was introduced from Bairrada by Professor Leão Ferreira de Almeida of the Estação Agronómica Nacional in Lisbon and came to be planted on Madeira from the late 1970s onwards. However no one seems to know its parentage. Named after the parish of São Jorge on the north side of the island, the area of production expanded

rapidly in the replanting programme that took place from the 1990s onwards and there are now 36ha, mostly around Santana on the north coast. This productive variety nonetheless has its drawbacks as it is highly susceptible to bunch rot. But it is aromatic when young and generally well liked by all the shippers.

A number of other so-called 'Malvasias' have been found growing on Madeira. In his book *Madeira, The Island Vineyard*, Noel Cossart mentions the Malvasia Babosa ('Lazy Malmsey'). This variety was supposedly introduced to Madeira by Genoese nobleman, Simon Accaioli in 1515 but it is not clear what this variety equates to, other than possibly a grape known just as 'Babosa' on the Portuguese mainland. It seems that this sub-variety no longer exists on the island although I once came across a mid-nineteenth century bottle labeled 'Boal Babosa'. There is also **Malvasia Fina** (otherwise known as Boal/Bual), and **Malvasia Roxa** ('Purple Malvasia'). In the winery it seems that no distinction has been made between the different types of Malvasia and, when it comes to vinifying the grapes, all the Malvasias are usually pressed and fermented together. Malmsey should therefore be thought of as a style of wine rather than a varietal.

Today's Malvasia / Malmsey is officially defined by IVBAM as being a 'dôce, sweet or rich' which means having at least 100g/l of residual sugar. In the past however Malmsey wines have been made that were drier in style.



“Very rich and old”: Malmsey in America at the turn of the 19th century

Madeira’s location off the northwest coast of Africa made it a natural stopping point for ships that followed the trade winds and currents to the shores of the American colonies. In 1665 British trade negotiations required all European wines exported to America to travel on British ships destined from British ports. The wines of Madeira were exempted creating a healthy trade and widespread thirst for the wine in the colonies. Early shipping news illustrates the continuous arrival of ships and their cargo from Madeira. The wines of Madeira were so dominant in the American market that it is the only wine listed in the current price reports for Philadelphia and New York from the 1720s through the 1760s. Other wines from Portugal eventually made the lists in the 1780s but Madeira held its place both in volume and price.

Priced at £40 to £100 per pipe, the introductory price for Madeira was the same as the most expensive alternative wine. Advertisements, from Boston down to Savannah, detail the various types and ages of Madeira that were imported into America. Amongst the most expensive offerings was the “very rich and old” Malmsey. Whereas other types of Madeira were available by the pipe, Malmsey was produced in such small quantities that it was typically sold by the quarter-cask and occasionally the bottle.

Madeira was priced in a realm that only affluent Americans could afford. Amongst these men it was the wine of choice for the earliest Presidents, Congressmen, and Supreme Court justices. Madeira figured prominently in the lives of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. All three men routinely sought the finest and oldest Madeira which they served both for private use and at the Presidential dining table.

These three purchased their Madeira together as well as separately. Their wines were ordered from merchants in America, from commercial agents in Europe, and directly from houses in Madeira. They continued to seek Madeira throughout the years when America went from being a British colony to an independent country. Despite their dedication to Madeira, Malmsey was purchased only a handful of times. Their correspondence shows that even for these men, Malmsey could be hard to obtain.

The creation of the city of Washington was approved in 1790. During the years that the President's House, now known as the White House, and the Capitol were under construction, Madeira in general could be purchased in nearby Georgetown and Alexandria, Virginia. The closest offerings of Malmsey first appear in 1791 up at Baltimore, Maryland. Malmsey was not advertised with any frequency until shortly after the first session of Congress was held in November, 1800. After which, Malmsey was typically on hand in Georgetown.

The occupation of the capital city brought in enough people that the local supply of Madeira was drained. One city merchant noted that "during the recess of Congress" he added a large stock of Madeira "some of which is of a very superior quality." Of all the selections for one Madeira shipper, Malmsey was the only one to be listed without price; instead credit terms were offered based on age. Thomas Jefferson would eventually classify Malmsey at nearly twice the cost of the high-quality London Particular. Malmsey, rare and expensive, had found a market in Washington.

If the taste for Malmsey was brought in by elected officials it certainly could have developed both in Williamsburg, Virginia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In both cities Malmsey was advertised as early as the mid-1760s. Indeed, while Thomas Jefferson was a law student in Williamsburg, he noted in 1773, that "Mrs. Wythe puts one tenth very rich superfine Malmsey to a dry Madeira, and makes a fine wine." In a later classification of the "different flavors or characters of wines" he labeled this blend as "silky Madeira". It soon became more difficult to make Mrs. Wythe's blend as a ban on the importation of Madeira into America went into effect in December 1774 shortly before the outbreak of the American Revolutionary War and lasted until the end.

Thomas Jefferson maintained his specific interest in Malmsey after the war ended. In 1786, while Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris, he ordered "very good Malvoisie de Madeira" or Malmsey, through a French firm. Only part of the order arrived so Thomas Jefferson requested the remaining be sent. As if to make up for the short-coming, an even larger amount was arrived. Incredibly, most of the extra Malmsey came from New York. Half of this order was intended for the Marquis de Lafayette. This particular pipe of Malmsey, noted as Madeira "de l'Amerique" in a memo to Lafayette's secretary, was selected by Francis Lewis. Francis Lewis wrote to Thomas Jefferson in the spring of 1786 how he picked the best of 40 pipes and that it was eight years old.

The Malmsey of Jefferson and Lafayette then was from the 1778 vintage. This post-Independence vintage was most likely imported into New York sometime after the end of the Revolutionary War. The war had disrupted the importation of Madeira into America making the availability of "choice Old Madeira Wine ... exceedingly Scarce & Dear".

There were just over one dozen advertisements for Madeira in the newspapers of Maryland and Virginia during 1782. There was more than ten times that amount in 1786. The thirst for Madeira which existed during the Colonial years had survived the difficulties of war.

Thomas Jefferson wrote from Paris that it was “impossible to get good and genuine Madeira wine” in the city. Malmsey was in general a scarce wine. Thomas Jefferson’s difficulty in obtaining it Paris was undoubtedly increased by the very “short” vintage of 1784 which was followed by the total “failure” for Malmsey of the 1785, 1786, and 1787 vintages.

The very same year that Jefferson imported his *Malvoisie*, George Washington requested vines slips of the “best eating Grape” from Madeira for planting at his Mount Vernon home in Virginia. What he received included a barrel of “Fine malmsey Grape” slips which did not survive the long ocean voyage. George Washington also ordered Madeira that year but was so surprised by the post-war expense that he wrote, “I have not yet tasted it, but presume it is fine: it ought to be so, for the cost of it”. The Madeira shipper explained that the British factory had raised the price of “first quality” pipes by 10% in response to the small and “not very generally good” vintage of 1784.

Madeira remained the favorite wine throughout James Madison’s life. To meet one particular order of Madeira he was shipped seven year old Sercial, “Terita or Burgundy Madeira”, and Malmsey. These wines were scarce and shipped in quarter-casks as a result. Though several letters are missing it appears that James Madison enjoyed the Malmsey so much that he placed another order. Unfortunately “not a drop of that description” could be found on the island and of the scarce wines he was just sent another quarter cask of Sercial from the personal cellar of Don Joao de Carvalhal. Regarded as the richest man on the island with the best plantations, it appears that even Don Carvalhal did not have any Malmsey.

Many guests of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison wrote in their diaries about the fine taste of these rare and old bottles. George Washington even designed such special coolers to hold his Madeira that they had to be made in London. James Madison also served his Madeira in coolers. On the evening of the Burning of Washington, during the War of 1812, the occupying British forces found his “super-Excellent Madeira” cooling in the Presidential dining room. The British drank this Madeira before torching the President’s House. Though the Presidential cellar was destroyed, the rest of James Madison’s wines were safe at Montpelier including a parcel of Madeira he had ordered together with George Washington known as his “Washington Wine”. James Madison’s habits of long aging, storage in a warm area, and naming of a parcel were soon to become the hallmarks of the great 19th century Madeira connoisseurs of the South and the North.



Please note: There is a detailed historical perspective of each wine by Mannie Berk (**MB**), which will precede my tasting notes included below (**RH**).

From Roy: Dear FREE version newsletter recipients, the balance of this article that details Mannie's history of each of the 20 bottles along with my tasting notes on each, is solely for subscribers and one of only two parts that can't be included for you this month.

If you would like to read the rest of this article and support FTLOP's efforts and have Premium Access to all of the 2016 newsletter content in PDF format, please consider a subscription to FTLOP here: <http://www.fortheloveofport.com/subscribe-to-ftlop-2/>



Port Personalities

In Focus

The FTLOP series, *Port Personalities In Focus*, alternates with *A Question for the Port Trade* every other issue. *In Focus* concentrates on bridging the gap, introducing readers to people who are not usually in the media's spotlight, with some license to occasionally "interview" someone who is. *In Focus* brings you candid comments, personal perspectives, and a better understanding of the people inside the trade. From sales and marketing professionals, to master blenders, winemakers and vineyard managers, to distributors and importers, owners and managing directors; *In Focus* will introduce you to Port personalities who work at small family-owned operations to the largest wine companies in Portugal. We hope you'll benefit from meeting the people on these pages.

FTLOP is proud to introduce you to **Tânia Branco Oliveira**

Here is Tania's story:



1. Please share some information about your life and how you wound up working in the Port and Douro wine trade and at what age?

I've always loved wine! I remember being around 10 years old and going to the harvest with my grandparents at their friends', near Braga. My grandfather was a huge wine lover. He had two favorite regions: Douro and Bairrada. I inherited this passion from him. I think my first wine was a Baga, when I was 9 years old. When you start with Baga, you're ready for everything!

My first work experience with Port was at 18, when I worked for 2 summers to make some extra money to travel before college started. I have great memory from those months and my interest in Port started at that time. I was always going to tastings and wanting to know more about the wines. I had my first 1994 Vintage Port there too. I remember feeling very special about it. After tasting it, I saved all my tips until I could buy one bottle. I still have it at home!

I studied marketing management and my first "real" job was at Wines of Portugal (Vinhos do Portugal) where I worked for 8 years. It was an excellent work experience, and I learned a lot about wine business, internationally speaking. A year and a half ago, I was invited to work at Sogevinus, as their Director of Public Relations and Communications department. I was very impressed with the project and I always wanted to work in the Port Industry. I said yes and now I'm part of the Sogevinus (includes: Barros, Burmester, Cálem, Gilbert's, Kopke, Rocha) team!

2. What is your favorite style of Port to drink at home, and can you name 2 or 3 of the greatest Ports you have ever tried?

I love all styles of Port, but the one closest to my heart and that I drink the most of is tawny. I always have four or five open bottles of Port at home, (My husband never complains although it's harder to find the milk in the fridge!). I used to drink more aged tawnies, (mainly 20 years old) but working at Sogevinus opened my eyes to Colheitas and aged whites. They are AMAZING! It's very hard to name the greatest Ports I have ever tried, so I'd rather talk about the ones I drink. To me, the greatest wines are the ones I keep having because I share them with my friends and family and they provide great memories.

I confess I'm obsessed with Kopke. The 30 Years Old White is divine! Kopke's Colheita 1966, 1957 & 1941 are my favourite old Colheitas. Burmester 40 Years Old, Barros Colheita 1974 and Cálem 1961 are a few other Ports that I will frequently have from time to time, and try to have in the fridge.



3. Besides Ports from your own company (or one's you've previously worked for), what other producers do you most enjoy drinking?

I'm very lucky because I drink a lot of other companies Ports and I can call it market research! At Sogevinus, every Friday afternoon around 4 p.m. we taste wines from a specific theme. It can be White Ports, 10 Years Old, LBV's, Reserve Tawny, Vintage. Everyone brings a bottle and we do a blind tasting. In the end we share our thoughts. It is a great exercise and helps to keep track of the market and learn about our competitor's products and is also excellent for team spirit!

I also enjoy Quinta do Noval very much and enjoy Niepoort too.

4. *What brings you the most joy in what you do within the Port and Douro wine trade?*

I am very happy to be able to meet people from all over the world and have the opportunity to present wines from the Sogevinus portfolio to them. My job is to make it as memorable an experience as possible, and as the wines deserve! It is a huge responsibility, and I feel very fortunate to have the chance to do what I love on a daily basis.



5. Would you please share one piece of unique trivia or historical information about your company that would be new to FTLOP readers?

Our Burmester Cellar, the Port Lodge directly next to the Dom Luiz I bridge, is the only Port wine cellar that is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's the only Port wine cellar with natural light and that is touching the Douro River. To me, this cellar is unique and peerless.

Another funny story is that I recently learned that our cellar master, Benjamim Gomes has a superstition. He never turns the radio off, as it is his belief that music helps our Colheitas in their ageing process. One Saturday I was at the Barros Lodge, alone with some guests presenting them with our Colheitas and I noticed the music was on. Mariza was playing on the radio, singing Fado and our guests looked at me saying this was the most beautiful moment they had in Portugal! I texted Benjamim saying he left the radio on and I couldn't be happier about it. I explained to him that we had a very special moment at the cellar because of him. He replied saying the radio, "is always on" even if there is no one working in the cellar. The music keeps the wine company. He made me smile!



6. Which individual has been your greatest mentor and how have they inspired you?

You got me thinking Roy ... I don't think I have a "wine mentor" although I admire several people and they inspire me every day. I'm also lucky that I had the opportunity to meet and work with my wine idols: Jancis Robinson, Steven Spurrier and Hugh Johnson.

7. What is the greatest challenge facing the Port trade today? What about Douro wine trade?

For Ports, I think the greatest challenge is real cooperation between the companies. We all know we need to attract new and younger consumers, to renew the image of the category and keep it relevant. Port is still seen by many as an old fashioned style of drink, too "seasonal" and only relevant for very specific moments of consumption. If we could all work together in trying to change this perception, we likely could achieve greater results.

For Douro, we need time to establish the region worldwide. The quality of our wines is very high and if we keep them authentic, using our indigenous grapes, I believe the goodwill we are receiving from the media will continue to increase.



8. Can you share one new project or improvement that your company is involved with currently?

We have some developing projects but I can't share them at this stage. To be continued ... ☺

9. What can the industry do to improve the promotion and education of Port wine and grow market share in the ever evolving global beverage marketplace?

I think the industry should think more about the consumers and what they want, instead of what we, the producers, want. We all say we want to attract a younger audience, but we use the same techniques to reach them. Targeting different groups of consumers using the same strategies is not efficient and won't work. We should all think together about what we want the strategy for Port to be and then develop an operational plan to reach it.



10. What non-wine activities do you enjoy?

Besides spending time with my family and playing every game my daughters want to enjoy, from hide and seek to make-believe singing competitions. I also love reading, traveling, being with my friends and walking on the beach.



EXCLUSIVE PORT BUYING OP FOR FTLOP SUBSCRIBERS



What better way to give thanks during the holidays than to announce that FTLOP is offering a GREAT *buying op for its subscribers*? There are 14 wines in total; most of them are Colheitas, plus a Vintage and pair of Douro reds. All are ex-cellars bottles stored by their west coast importer. By delivering unique opportunities such as this, a few times per year, FTLOP enhances the value of your paid subscription and shows gratitude for your loyalty. This exclusive week-long offering is solely for our subscribers and will not appear anywhere else. It will easily pay for your annual subscription!

Dear FREE version recipients, the balance of this SUBSCRIBER's Buying Opportunity is solely for subscribers and one of only two parts that can't be included for you this month. Great wines going back well over a half century are included in this offering, ex-cellars and GREAT pricing in both 750 and 375 ml bottles. You have the rest of this week to become a subscriber and be able to access this and all 2016 offerings and PDF newsletter content. Please consider a subscription to FTLOP here: <http://www.fortheloveofport.com/subscribe-to-ftlop-2/>

THE LAST WORD

FTLOP 10th Anniversary Celebration

Seattle & Sammamish, WA ~ July 24 – 26th, 2015



Article by Glenn Elliott © December 2015

In 2009, I was still a Port newbie. I had been drinking Port casually for just a few years (starting in ~2004), but had finally found a group of people on fortheloveofport.com who shared my love for the drink and were friendly and knowledgeable. Through them I had managed to experience my first tasting – an “Old & Odd” in New York City. I was hooked on the idea and ready to try it again. So I contacted Roy and suggested that we hold a tasting in the Seattle area around the end of July and he agreed. That tasting was a stellar success, and coincidentally was at the right time to qualify as the FTLOP 4th Anniversary Tasting. We’ve held one every year since.

That made 2015 the 10th Anniversary Tasting. We started planning earlier than usual – in February – and almost immediately had a full complement of tasters without ever having to post about it on the forums. We even had visitors fly in from Norway! Rune and Emmy Gustavsen certainly travelled the farthest for our little celebration.



The first couple of Anniversary Tastings were one-evening affairs. People would bring something nice from the cellars and we'd all share and enjoy. We had some spectacular lineups, but eventually Roy wanted to expand the celebration to a full weekend and give it a theme. We've done verticals and horizontals as well as themes. We might have considered doing a 1985 horizontal for the 10th Anniversary, but did that on its own at the end of January so needed something else.

A thread on FTLOP.com had already been searching for a "next idea" for a tasting following the 1985 horizontal, and one of the most popular suggestions was a 40-yr old Tawny Taste-Off. We have done Taste-Offs for Ruby Reserves and 20-yr olds in the past and they're a lot of fun. (John Musnuff has since done a 10-yr old Taste-Off in New Jersey.) That gave us a theme for Saturday night. For Sunday we started out with "bring something interesting from 1960 or earlier" but that quickly turned into a 1960 mini-horizontal with a few added surprises.

Surprisingly, our usual room at the Holiday Inn in Issaquah was already booked for the weekend, so Roy had to reach out to his network to find us an alternative. He found us two spectacular venues! Per custom, I made placemats for the event using Julian Wiseman's placemat software (www.jdawiseman.com/placemat.html).



Saturday, July 25, 2015

For the 40-yr old Taste Off, Roy arranged for us to use the Harbor Room at Daniel's Broiler on Lake Union. Daniels set us up with a large "open square" arrangement of tables so that we could all face each other to make discussions easier. Even so, 16 people makes for a pretty large donut! But we had plenty of room for glasses, notebooks, water, and elbows. It was one of the more comfortable tastings that I've attended, space-wise.

We ended up with 13 different 40-year olds, 3 Colheitas, and an Aussie sticky. One of the Colheitas was a ringer that I added with Sandy Becker's help – had I brought it myself Roy would have been suspicious, so I asked Sandy to "provide" it so that it could slip in without arousing suspicions. Our list of 40-yr olds included several that are hard to find in the USA as well as the standards, so I felt it was a very good representation of what the 40-yr old category can be. We tasted blind (actually double blind for most of the attendees, though not Roy or I) in 4 flights, and in a random order. My notes (and guesses, where I had one) are below. I don't normally bother with notes on the finish at a tasting in order to save time ... I'm already one of the slower tasters.

Flight #1

Port #1 – Yalumba 50-yr old Tawny

Color: Very dark amber/brown with a yellow rim. Looks like dark stained wood. Clear of sediment, but very dark.

Nose: Coffee, stained wood, dark caramel, cedar/redwood, bourbon vanilla

Palate: Tangy and rich like sweet & sour sauce, very concentrated but yet also clean and crisp. Slightly savory/buttery note. Very thick – beyond what I'd call a full body, but not quite what I'd call syrupy.

Score: 95 points.

To me this was easy to identify as one of the ringers, but despite knowing that there was an Australian sticky in the tasting I didn't get that far. An outstanding wine and not out of place in this lineup. I picked it 2nd overall.

Port #2 – 1958 Krohn Colheita (bottled 2006)

Color: Medium brown with a tan/yellow rim. Slightly murky.

Nose: Citrus, spicy, cedar, resin?, tropical fruits?

Palate: Same tropical fruits as on the nose, very smooth with a bit of a coffee edge hinting at significant age. Some banana.

Score: 94 points.

I picked this as a ringer as well, primarily because the tropical fruit notes seemed out of place for a 40-yr old.

Port #3 – Kopke (bottled 2007)

Color: Medium tawny with an orange/yellow rim. Clear in the glass.

Nose: Hearty bread almost like a sourdough, shoe polish. Dark and brooding scents.

Palate: An "average" 40-yr old. Mild citrus, brown sugar, tart and very ripe apricot. Mellow.

Score: 90 points.

This felt like a baseline (read: MVP – minimum viable product) 40-yr old to me, i.e. nothing special. Sufficient quality to belong in the tasting, but nothing to make it stand out. I was surprised to see it was the Kopke, as I normally rate Kopke several points higher. Perhaps it had been in bottle too long?

Port #4 – Porto Rocha (bottled 2005)

Color: Medium tawny. Somewhat dull, tending toward brown. Clear, though... it's just the color that's dull.

Nose: Old tawny, some citrus, some brown sugar. It gives the effect of an old reading room with lots of leather chairs, old wood, and lingering pipe tobacco.

Palate: More "pop" than #3 which gives it life. Slightly sour, but plenty of sweet and good acidity. Similar citrus, brown sugar, and tart very ripe apricot to #3.

Score: 92 points.

Not too surprised to see it was Porto Rocha, as it and the Kopke are sisters. This bottle didn't seem harmed by the years in glass, though, assuming that was the problem with the Kopke. Group Port of the flight.



Flight #2

Port #5 – Dow (bottled 2008)

Color: Medium dark tawny or medium brown, clear in the glass.

Nose: Some leather, burnt sugar, some citrus. Faint caramel.

Palate: Rich and powerful. Dry-ish for a 40-year old. Lots of torrefacted notes.

Score: 91 points.

I was initially suspicious that this might also be a ringer due to its dry presentation, but eventually decided that it wasn't.

Port #6 – Quinta da Romaneira (bottled 2011)

Color: Medium to dark tawny, clear in the glass.

Nose: Slightly spirit, faint vanilla, tart apricot, some brown sugar, some aromatic wood

Palate: Intensely sweet, smooth, rich, and very deep/complex. Great acidity keeps the sugar level in check. Layers of flavor starting with dark brown sugar followed by rich dried fruits, pecan, and a little walnut. The finish is notably long and obviously so even in the semi-rushed environment of a tasting.

Score: 95 points.

I guessed this was the Romaneira and was correct – it's my favorite 40-yr old. Some in the trade have wondered why the 40-yr old category exists; to them I say, "here, try this." While the Yalumba is an outstanding wine in its own right, when confronted by the Romaneira it yields to a proper Port. My Port of the night, and the overall Port of the night as well despite not winning Port of the flight. Ah, the vagaries of "show of hands" voting!

Port #7 – Sandeman (bottled 2014)

Color: Medium light tawny, crystal clear – gem like clarity. One of the prettiest Ports on the placemat.

Nose: Bourbon vanilla, sandalwood, light caramel

Palate: Tangy and tart, some orange pith, meyer lemon

Score: 92 points.

I suspect that the Sandeman suffered from following the Romaneira, though it was still excellent. It is simply a different style of Port and considerably younger than the Romaneira so the contrast is a bit unfair.

Port #8 – Andresen (bottling date unknown)

Color: Very slightly cloudy, medium dark tan. This bottle was hand-carried from Norway, which probably explains the cloudiness.

Nose: Leather (tanned), lots of nuts, citrus?, some sweet lime?, paraffin

Palate: Citrus, average sweetness, lots of torrefacted notes. It seems a bit simple, yet still delicious.

Score: 93 points.

In retrospect, after the reveal, something seems to have been off with this bottle despite the excellent rating. "A bit simple" is not something I would normally associate with Andresen, which is one of my favorite producers of Tawny Ports. Group Port of the flight.



Flight #3

Port #9 – 1955 Burmester Colheita (bottled 1973)

Color: Medium brown. Looks dull, and though I hesitate to say it, lifeless.

Nose: Very faint VA. Soft lemon. Light, almost fruity. The nose doesn't match the appearance.

Palate: Mellow and tangy. Slight, vague, metallic note. Not quite balanced.

Score: 87 points.

A fun bottle to try, but overmatched in this tasting.

Port #10 – S. Leonardo (bottled 2011)

Color: Medium dark tawny; what a 40-year old should look like.

Nose: Some bottle stink, a bit of alcohol. Slightly bready... slightly savory?

Palate: Well rounded, well balanced. Very sweet but has the acidity to back it up and keep it in balance. Where the Kopke felt like an MVP, this feels like a “standard” 40-year old.

Score: 92 points.

While I thought this was a very nice Port, the group thought it was 2nd overall behind the Romaneira. Group Port of the flight.

Port #11 – Quinta de Brunheda (bottled 2013)

Color: Cloudy, otherwise medium tawny.

Nose: Sweat tea, high toned alcohol

Palate: Tart, great acidity. Bigger than #10 but not as balanced. Vanilla icing. Kind of strange and seems a bit simple.

Score: 91 points.

I guessed this was a ringer due to the vanilla icing and overall strangeness. This didn't seem like a representative bottle of the Brunheda to me.

Port #12 – Quevedo (bottling date unknown)

Color: Medium brown, cloudy

Nose: Some bottle stink, otherwise very reticent. Not much there.

Palate: Somewhat rough but otherwise very pleasant. Seems much older than 40 years. Very powerful, with lots of brown sugar.

Score: 93 points.

I guessed this was the Brunheda due to the apparent age. Whoops! All of Quevedo's tawny Ports have impressed me, and their 40-yr old is no different. The rough edge is not normal, though – I usually find the Quevedo very smooth and luscious. Still, an excellent glass of Port!



Flight #4

Port #13 – Casa de Santa Eufemia (bottled 2014)

Color: Medium dark brown, very slightly cloudy

Nose: Some cardboard, wood, tanned leather, somewhat sweet, also a faint spicy wood note

Palate: Wow! Very nice. Balanced, powerful, and elegant all at once. Very rich and sweet, but balanced by powerful acidity. A superb glass of Port.

Score: 94 points.

I guessed this was the Eufemia, but it was really just a wild guess. Tied with the Moreira for group Port of the flight.

Port #14 – Graham (bottled 2013)

Color: Medium dark tawny

Nose: Pasta? Rich and deep dried fruits. Paraffin.

Palate: Soft and a bit simple, though pleasant. Good sugar/sweetness, but not quite enough acidity to keep it in balance. A faint bitter edge. Some caramel.

Score: 90 points.

An unsurprising reveal for me, as I've never been a fan of Graham's tawnies like I am of their Vintage Ports. They tend to be too sweet for me though never into the cloying range, but for anything to be too sweet for me is saying something.

Port #15 – Quinta do Noval (bottled 2007)

Color: Medium tawny, slightly on the darker side.

Nose: Pleasant and tart. For lack of a better description, it smells rich and full. There's plenty there, but it is so well blended that I can't separate the aromas.

Palate: Very nice, rich, and medium full-bodied. Very faint soap. Some caramel, some brown sugar, some dried over-ripe apricot.

Score: 92 points.

A somewhat low score for me for the Noval, but only by a point or two. Perhaps another bottle suffering from too much bottle age or too little decant time?

Port #16 – Quinta do Portal (bottled 2010)

Color: Light tawny, very clear. Too light for a 40-yr old.

Nose: Gunpowder, some bottle stink? A bit foul. Rotting meat?

Palate: Pretty weak. Light vanilla, some vague frosting. Not nearly as unpleasant as the nose sounds, though also not nearly the quality needed to belong in this tasting.

Score: 85 points. And that's generously allowing the palate to overcompensate for the foul nose. The palate was probably worth 87 points, but the nose was DNPIM.

Port #17 – 1937 Quinta do Moreira Colheita (bottled 2000?)

Color: Medium brown, very clear

Nose: Leather, very rich, cigar box, dark varnished wood

Palate: Rich, silky, heavy, powerful. Lots of age. Lots of old leather and pipe tobacco. Another Port that makes you think of a dark, leather-filled library or reading room. This belongs with a fireplace, and big leather chair, and a good book. (Leather bound, of course.)

Score: 92 points.

I knew this was the Moreira so didn't say anything. I enlisted Sandy Becker's help to even get this into the tasting, because Roy generally declines when they are offered. This isn't so much a quality issue as a knowledge issue - Moreira's Tawny Ports need an extra-long decant to show well, and most people under-decant them badly. I decanted this and let it sit on my kitchen counter for 5 days before the tasting. It would have been fine with another day or two, too. Tied with the Eufemia for group Port of the flight.



Sunday, July 26, 2015

On Sunday we travelled to the west shore of Lake Sammamish, to the waterfront home of Thamis and Fernando Mendez, who are close friends with Roy and his wife. We gathered on their covered dock for a lakeside tasting spanning 1920 – 1960. The weather forecast was a bit worrisome, but things were beautiful as we arrived and set up.

Sunday's tasting was sighted so that we'd know what we were enjoying. Most of us had little to no experience with these Ports as 1960, 1955, and 1948 are old enough to be fairly rare (and correspondingly expensive). The two older Ports were firsts for everyone except Roy, as I recall.

Based on my notes it appears that we never went back through to vote on the Port of the night. I have notes for the Port of each flight, but no end results for the group.





Flight #1 – The Oldies

1920 Wiese & Krohn Vintage Port

Color: Medium to dark tawny/brown. Looks wood-aged, though everything we know about the bottle says that this is a Vintage Port.

Nose: Soft, tertiary. Smells like a very old Vintage Port. Faint dates, some fig.

Palate: Soft, smooth, very pleasant, very tertiary. Slightly flat/one-note. Yummy and drinkable, but nothing special (other than its age). Toasty sugar finish. Vague tropical fruitiness.

Score: 87 points.

A very pleasant Port to drink, but interesting mostly due to its age and the really cool bottle.

1926 C. da Silva Vintage Port

Color: Cloudy, light tawny-orange. Looks like a very old basic tawny.

Nose: Slightly chemical. Some Meyer lemon.

Palate: Tangy, almost bitter citrus. Vaguely chemical. Citrus pith. Tart margarita. After some time, a distinct note of black tea developed.

Score: 83 points.

A fun Port to try, but not something I'd want to drink regularly. It very much felt over-the-hill.

1948 Taylor Vintage Port

Color: Medium dark garnet. Clear in the glass.

Nose: Overripe black cherry, some dates. Dark stone fruits.

Palate: Rich plum and other stone fruits. Missing that trademark black pepper that I normally associate with Taylor's VPs. Nice, full body. Very drinkable, very elegant, but also very powerful. Sublime.

Score: 95 points.

A great example of a legendary Port. Group Port of the flight.

1948 Fonseca Vintage Port

Color: Very dark ruby, similar in intensity to the Taylor.

Nose: Dates, red licorice

Palate: Overripe strawberry, some raspberry. Pleasantly warm. Finish is a bit short, but enjoyable.

Score: 93 points.

Those with more experience seemed to think that this bottle wasn't firing on all cylinders, but I thought it was excellent.



Flight #2 – 1955 Vintage Ports

1955 Cockburn Vintage Port

Color: Medium red/orange.

Nose: Stone fruits, plum, faint date. Rich and full.

Palate: Some tannins. Wonderfully rich & fruity, but the entry is fairly thin.

Score: 92 points.

Overall an excellent Port, but the thin entry held it back in this flight. This was the only Port in the flight to not receive any votes at all, but that's a reflection of the quality of the flight more so than the quality of the Cockburn.

1955 Martinez Vintage Port

Color: Medium dark red, some orange.

Nose: Mild spirit, light stone fruits, some red licorice.

Palate: Full and rich. Some tannins (including some in the finish), deep dark honey. Borderline too rich & sweet for the acidity. Still, pretty fabulous.

Score: 94 points.

Martinez is almost a sleeper in 1955. You never really hear people talking about it, but it's now been a highlight at 3 different tastings for me amongst the usual suspects. It's not really realistic to say "stock up" on something this old, but if you see it, grab it.

1955 Graham Vintage Port

Color: Medium dark red, some orange

Nose: Muted. Faint stone fruits. Very faint eucalyptus.

Palate: Very rich. Faint tannins, but enough to give it some structure. More of that deep, dark honey note like in the Martinez. Not as overtly rich and sweet as the Martinez, which allows it to shine a little more.

Score: 96 points.

Other than the nose being a bit muted, I can't really think of anything that I could say is "wrong" with this Port, especially for a 1955. Simply outstanding. Group Port of the flight.

1955 Taylor Vintage Port

Color: Medium dark red, some garnet.

Nose: Light cinnamon red notes, light eucalyptus

Palate: Faint pepper. Lighter body than the Graham, but still what I'd call full. Rich and very enjoyable.

Score: 92 points.

Others like this a lot more than I did, but I felt like it didn't have the body and richness of either the Graham or the Martinez. Lost Port of the flight to the Graham by a single vote, 6-7.



Our hosts on Sunday, Fernando & Thamis Esteves

Flight #3 – 1960 Vintage Ports, *part 1*

1960 Avery Vintage Port (produced by Warre)

Color: Medium garnet.

Nose: Nothing particularly interesting... it smells like an older Vintage Port.

Palate: Starts simple, but grows more complex over time. Soft, elegant. Nicely sweet fruits.

Score: 86 points.

A fine bottle of Port, but not really worth the cost of a 1960. Fading... it's time to drink up.

1960 Croft Vintage Port

Color: Medium garnet.

Nose: Red hots, green (read: unripe) strawberry.

Palate: Cinnamon toward the red hots candy end of the spectrum. Some faint tannins. Nice, pleasant, reasonably rich.

Score: 88 points.

Another fine bottle of Port, but again not really worth the cost of a 1960. Drink up.

1960 Sandeman Vintage Port

Color: Medium garnet.

Nose: Muted, very very faint rubber. (Converse tennis shoe?)

Palate: Medium body with decent acidity. Pleasant and easy to drink. Gentle fruity sweetness.

Score: 88 points.

Some said this wasn't a representative bottle of what 1960 Sandeman can be, but it didn't seem out of character with the other 1960s that we'd had to that point. As with the Avery and Croft, it's a nice enough Port but not really worth what you have to pay for it. Drink up.

1960 Warre Vintage Port

Color: Dark red/garnet. Easily the darkest of this flight.

Nose: Slight VA/vinegar. Faint sautéed green pepper. Celery? Black licorice.

Palate: Some tannins, nice and rich, some cherry cola. Pleasant, and unlike the others in this flight it seems to have some life left.

Score: 90 points.

Group Port of the flight, though in this flight that wasn't saying much. It was interesting how different the Warre was from the Avery, since Avery bottle Warre's Port in 1960.



Flight #4 – 1960 Vintage Ports, part 2

1960 Dow Vintage Port

Color: Dark red.

Nose: Slightly smoky, ripe cherry, faint bright plum.

Palate: Somewhat hearty like a multi-grain bread, but in a Port-like way. Very rich and round. Nicely balanced, but feels like it's fading.

Score: 89 points.

The second flight of 1960s Ports is already starting out better than the first, though not by much. The Dow is probably fine to hold for a few years, but realistically it also falls into the "drink up" category.

1960 Quinta do Noval Vintage Port

Color: Medium red/garnet.

Nose: Slightly bready, faint Christmas spices (without the sweeter end of cinnamon and clove).

Palate: Brighter than the others. Nice acidity. Still alive and has some tannins. The Black Knight of 1960? (I'm not dead yet!)

Score: 92 points.

Here's one that might be worth the price of entry, and is certainly worth it if you're looking for a birth year or anniversary Port. It's probably at its peak or very slightly past, but it is excellent.

1960 Ferreira Vintage Port

Color: Medium garnet.

Nose: Satsuma orange, tart apple, cinnamon... but not quite.

Palate: Faint cotton candy. Some muskmelon or honeydew. Medium body, pleasant & elegant.

Score: 88 points.

A fine showing for the Ferreira, though I've had some that were slightly better (91-92 points). 1960 is one of Ferreira's better years, relatively speaking, making it a great buy if you're looking specifically for something from 1960.

1960 Fonseca Vintage Port

Color: Dark red/garnet.

Nose: Heavier than the others. Somehow smells tannic. Candied red apple.

Palate: Moderate tannins and good acidity. Great fruit. Nice and rich.

Score: 93 points.

Really the only 1960 at this tasting that might not yet be over the hill, though it's likely at its peak.

Wrap-up

A couple of takeaways from the Vintage Port session:

1948 is probably as good as you've heard, and I'm extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to try these two legendary Ports head-to-head, but I doubt I'll ever buy one for myself. These are Ports that you need to taste once in order to experience the history, but after that your Port budget is probably best spent elsewhere.

1955 is an odd duck. There are some outstanding Ports from that year, but you really need to do some research before buying because the names won't necessarily be familiar. Adams and Martinez are dark horses that most people would never consider. Let those people pay for the Grahams, Taylors, and FONSECAS.

1960 is a fine year, but it's at best a 3-star year and realistically is just a 2-star year. There are some fine bottles of Port to be had, but they're all past their peak at this point. Some may remain near that peak for a while longer, but most seem to be trailing off. If you have 1960s in your cellar, it's time to drink up unless you're saving them for something special.



Dinner

After the tasting we had a wonderful catered dinner of authentic Portuguese cuisine. Chef **Silvia Colombaretti** prepared a spectacular meal, kicked off with a plate of assorted cheese with truffled almonds, hearty Portuguese bread, cheese-filled sweet hot peppers, a fig/prosciutto/goat cheese mouse, and Caldo Verde. The main course was a traditional Portuguese duck and sausage rice and a green salad. Dessert consisted of Toucinho do ceu, Fios de Ovos, Baba de Moca with a berry and balsamic reduction dressing or Chantilly cream. Splendid! And the perfect way to cap off the afternoon and evening.

Afterward

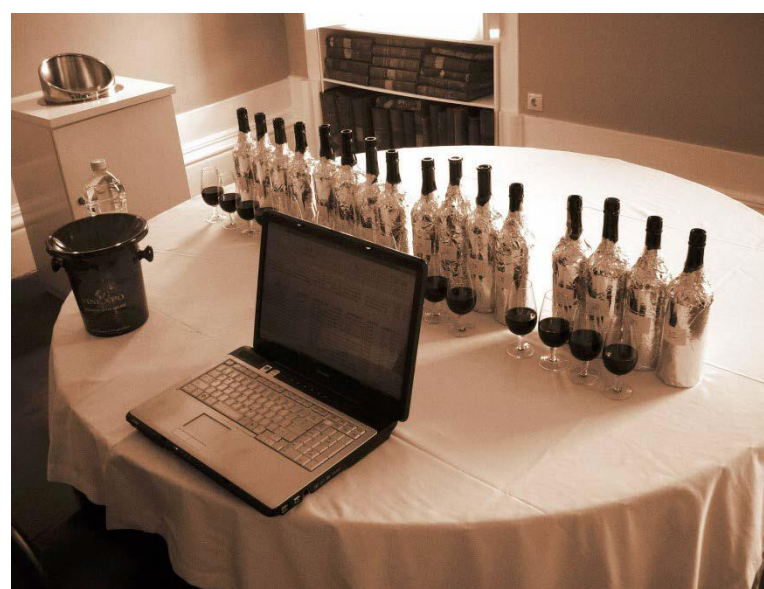
Roy and I have now held 7 FTLOP Anniversary tastings together, and each one somehow manages to one-up the rest. Every year I think to myself, "how are we going to top this?" Somehow the next year we manage to do it. This year for the 10th Anniversary I think it was the people and the settings that made it unique. Fernando and Thamís were wonderful hosts on Sunday and being outside right on the lake gave the tasting an extra special feeling. Thank you for welcoming us into your home!

I would also like to thank everyone who traveled to Seattle to attend – Andy and David from California, Eric from Colorado, Jamie and Linda from Chicago, and Rune and Emmy all the way from Norway! I find it amazing that people would travel so far just for our little gatherings, but then when I spend a moment to reflect it all makes perfect sense. Where else can we all enjoy our favorite beverage with such great friends in such fantastic venues?

Lastly, I would like to thank Roy and Stewart, who back in 2005 took a crazy idea and made a website out of it. Without ForTheLoveOfPort.com, most of us would have never met. Which leaves us with the usual question, how are we going to top this next year? I look forward to trying!



ROY'S TASTING NOTES



PORT



1972 ~ Graham's ~ Single Harvest ~ Tawny Port - Individually numbered bottles were released earlier this year, from nearly 1/3 of the casks of this Port originally vinified by Peter Symington; just two years after the family purchased Graham's. Medium maple color, offering a distinctive bouquet of tangerine, caramel, honey, glove leather, raisin and fig notes. Medium-weight and with a seductively unctuous mouthfeel, this Tawny is loaded with cleansing acidity that provides ample structure and verve. The dried apricot, prune and tangy-sweet interplay combine to create a luscious, warm and multi-layered flavor profile. The Graham's 1972 is a fine wood-aged Port which presents a sweet torched sugar nuance together with a chestnut infused finish of excellent length. **~ 94 points ~ 8/3/15**

2005 ~ Kopke ~ White ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2015. Clear orange-amber appearance. The nose of this wine won me over immediately, even given its youthful playfulness with scents of acacia flowers, cinnamon, cinnamon and a distinct smoky essence that adds a nice seasoning here. Medium weight and excellent balance due to the focus of the acidity. This smooth and velvety White Kopke is packed with an off-dry blend of citrus, golden raisin, lots of peach, fresh honey and a hint of praline. So young, but like a solid young Sauternes, it doesn't require lots of age in order to be a refined drink-now kind of sipper ... or cellar it for 3-5 years. A very different take on Colheita! ~ **91+ points ~ 8/7/15**

2005 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2015. Fig color with glints of garnet in the center and a clear edge. “Ooh that smell. Can't you smell that smell.” Absolutely! Explosive notes of mahogany, salted caramel, white peach, cane sugar, tobacco and saddle leather combine to provide a really sweet and earthy silhouette that is piquant and multiplex for such a young 'un. This is a light-bodied sultry ten year old with in-yer-face fruit that's evolved beyond its years ... in a good way. It is fresh, balanced and ready for enjoying now. Yep, another 10-30 years in cask will create something even better, but I'd drink this any day of the week, with or without dessert. A Kopke sweetie where the zesty acidity really shines along with a simple and slurpy persistent finish. ~ **90 points ~ 8/7/15**

1996 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2014. Medium dark coffee color with a golden edge. Just about to leave its teenage years behind with alluring notes of tangerine, singed caramel, cinnamon and hazelnut. Medium-full bodied, opulent mouthfeel with slightly reductive flavors including warm crème caramel, burnt sugar and butterscotch. The aged aromas and flavors are admirable and this 1996 is texturally a real treat, seductively so and rare for a Colheita nearly two decades of age. The acid tensivity and overall balance is another strong suit, and this Kopke over-delivers for the comparative price between LBV and a 10 year old tawny. ~ **92 points ~ 8/7/15**

1995 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2009. Ruby highlights are seen in this light tawny colored 1995, a fine year in the Douro that likely would've been declared a vintage year had it not been for the excellent 1994 crop of Vintage Ports that came right before it. The bouquet here is almost Boal Madeira like ... concentrated wood-aged torrefaction, dark and complex. Fragrant scents of pecan pie, saline, torched sugar and light mahogany notes blend with swirling notes of tart citrus fruits. Voluptuous in the mouth with even greater potential if left in wood several decades; yet Kopke's 1995 is delicious and developed for solid drinking right now; seemingly akin to the quality of an upper tier 20 Year Old Tawny Port with loads of the aforementioned torrefacted quality. ~ **92 points ~ 8/7/15**

1985 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2015, just in time for its 30th birthday party. Medium maple color with garnet glints and yellow straw meniscus. The first thing that pops after nosing and sipping this Port is its power and drive. But even more so, the captivating deep wood influence in this particular Colheita. This typically is about the age where many single harvest tawnies begin to evolve to a point where they really develop the beginnings of some secondary and early tertiary character. In that way, the '85 Kopke excels for its age. Succulent praline and crème brûlée with some peach and interplay of citrus and tropical flavors; it is all there, along with aggressive acidity that delivers near perfect balance and a beautifully developed long nutty finish. My score is likely stingy, but I prefer to be conservative when scoring wines that later appear for your buying pleasure. ~ **93+ points** ~ **8/7/15**

1976 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2015. Now we've arrived. Pretty much year in and year out, Kopke delivers very good to excellent Colheitas. After all, it is their significant strength. While other producers may focus on Douro wines and make Ports to enhance cash flow, Kopke has always been a wood-aged maestro. In fact, they were the first, remember 1638! Now back to this 1976. We have finally reached the next level, nearly 40 years old and think of the difference between a 20 Year Old Tawny and that of a 30 vs. 40. To use another producer as an example, with S. Leonardo, the difference between each step up is significant. This Kopke delivers that dynamic too, as it is now in its sweet spot; literally. Caramel, peach and orange marmalade come to the fore with the intensity of laser focused acid that cuts to the core. Sumptuous, precise, big boned and the beauty and length of its finish, worthy of superlatives. Questioning the 1976? The answer is simply, yes! ~ **94 points** ~ **8/7/15**

1975 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2015. Expansive nutty aromas with macadamia, walnuts and some tobacco leaf initially, followed by marzipan, baking spices and nectarine. Complex -- the palate replicates these same personality traits. The electric acidity kicks it all up a notch and delivers freshness and verve that most 40 Year Old Tawny Ports are rarely capable of achieving. While less heavy, this Kopke still manages to provide both a viscous and velvety texture regardless of weight. It's a classy classic Colheita and for those that appreciate the genre, you'll be loving on this one. Beyond the delicious flavor profile, the layered length and aftertaste is worth the price of admission. Simply put, this 1975 Kopke is akin to the quality and deft blending of a fine 40 Year Old Tawny Port and will be offered at a price that's less than most 30 Year Old Tawny Ports! It's an easy decision if you ask me. The only tough call is whether to go with the 1975 or 1976, as both are gorgeous Ports. ~ **94 points** ~ **8/7/15**

1966 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2014. I've had this Port a handful of times, but haven't written up recent experiences. I've had 3 from the 2007 bottling, so while this newer version spent an extra seven years in wood, it became even more concentrated -- at nearly a half century of age. It appears like a dark version of maple syrup, only the color, with a golden edge. Smoky scents and char early on that add seasoning to the spice, brown sugar, apricot preserve and praline aromatics. The 1966 has always been a hedonistic Colheita and albeit medium weight, the duality of the smooth elegance and prickly acid create a balance that immediately rivet one's attention on the contents in the glass. Not overly sweet, but the torrefacted, mild nuttiness and citrus flavors make for something really special here, and the finish is like a roller coaster ride. I know that many Kopke fans consider this one of their best. I'll just say that it is darn consistent and I am being conservative with my rating.
~ 94+ points ~ 8/7/15

1965 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2014. The bouquet offers sweeter fragrances than the 1966 although the '65 begins with some green notes and herbal essence of esteva, followed by dried date, unblanched almonds, ginger and caramel apple. It is medium-full, rich and intricately layered in the middle, which is ratcheted up a notch in this Colheita; while the ultra-smooth mouthfeel is almost syrupy in its concentration, (but not its structure). There is a warming edge to this Port, but it never seems spicity or hot, and the acid level is simply off the charts. The well-sculpted flavors begin with pecan, candied praline and some caramelized sugar, bolstered by tangy orange zest, sweet fig and prune that deliver the liquid evidence of this Kopke's complexity and absolutely scrumptious aftertaste! **~ 95 points ~ 8/7/15**

1955 ~ Kopke ~ Colheita Port – Bottled in 2011. Medium-dark coffee color with a greenish-gold meniscus. Scintillating scents of macadamia, light VA, mahogany, salted caramel, chestnut and a sense of lots of wood-aging ... almost Madeira-like. Rich, off-dry, succulent and medium weight, this well-aged Kopke delivers a lovely mouthfeel that is not only smooth and elegant but viscous considering its body weight is not all that massive. Exotic and contemplative with an array of citrus lemon-lime and tropical ripe peach that meld well with the light nutty characteristics. Understated and refined with a crazy long sweet treacle aftertaste. Kopke's 1955 is a star studded Colheita with verve.
~ 95 points ~ 8/7/15

n/v ~ Kopke ~ 30 Year Old ~ White ~ Tawny Port – Bottled 2013. Dark golden-orange hue. The nose of this aged White Tawny clearly expresses why this category of Port is becoming more sought after by aficionados willing to explore. Orange marmalade strikes first and is followed by notes of brioche, marzipan, crème brûlée and roasted chestnuts. The texture is creamy, no, more like butter, yet medium weight and with focused, nearly sharp acidity that launches the length to another planet. At the core of this 30 year old, the essence is about nuttiness with an off-dry backdrop of tropical fruit preserves. It's seamless and persistent with enough intensity to keep it interesting after the first glass. **~ 94 points ~ 12/10/15**

n/v ~ Kopke ~ 40 Year Old ~ Tawny Port – Bottled 2007. Sultry scents of salted cashews, ethereal Indian spices, sandalwood and nougat. Full-bodied, crammed with sophisticated flavors that change with nearly every sip: English toffee candies, dried peach, bees wax – honey, Medjool dates and rum raisin ice cream. Exotic and complex from the very first sip. The velvety finish lasts long and then the incredible acidity kicks it into hyper-drive. A profound tawny and great Kopke! **~ 95 points ~ 12/10/15**

2003 ~ Porto Rocha ~ Vintage Port – Produced, bottled and shipped by Hutcheson, Feuerheerd & Associados - Vinhos, S.A. One of the few remaining Port companies to use these hand stenciled bottles. This was a trade sample bottle, as the 2003 VP will be offered as part of a *buying op* later this year. Dark garnet and nearly opaque to the clear rim. The nose offers fresh cut flowers and is pure and fruit filled, with tell-tale blueberry and briary boysenberry notes, plus hints of black licorice and esteva. Tasted over two days, this stayed fresh, lively and consistent throughout and hasn't changed much since the bottle I consumed a year ago. Otherwise, with a 4-6 hour decant, the Rocha just kept gaining steam and was extremely mouthfilling, smooth and polished. This could be a perfect "cellar defender" as it is already 12 years old and will drink well through at least 2025-2030, but it is disarmingly approachable right now. It will continue to improve over the next 5-10 years, but from there it'll just glide along on a nice plateau. The 2003 Rocha is absolutely delicious and round and something you can pop and pour too. It defines a harmonious Vintage Port! **92+ points ~ 10/24/15**

2011 ~ Quevedo ~ LBV ~ Port – Born in a great vintage year, filled with fresh floral and framboise fragrances, and a hint of cacao nibs, it's not easy to remove your nose from the glass in order to take the first sip. Ripe but not overtly sweet, fresh and balanced from the get go, this LBV improved over the course of a week. Its smooth mouthfeel, elegant style and verve are captivating, with flavors of blue berry and black; the explosive finish will keep you coming back for more. This Quevedo LBV Port is a rock star and still has plenty of room to mature and improve. **~ 93+ points ~ 7/9/15**

2009 ~ Dow's ~ LBV ~ Port – Currently selling for \$17-\$22 in the USA. The 2009 possesses a generous bouquet of lavender, cherry, clove and smoky stewed plum notes. Ripe and fruit forward, with off-dry flavors of boysenberry jam, black berry and licorice. Full-bodied and approachable, the 2009 had a glossy texture plus firm tannins that will allow this LBV to age and drink well through the early part of the 2020s. Its long and nuanced finish adds style points. Another fine Dow's LBV in line with the likes of their very solid 2005 and 2007 versions. ~ **92 points ~ 10/29/15**

2013 ~ Vale do Bomfim ~ Douro Red Wine – Lovely floral fragrance, smoked cherries and a sense of minerality, pine resin and black licorice. Medium-bodied, off-dry style and really easy to approach. Concentrated flavors of brambly black cherry pie and kalamata. It was even better the 2nd day as the chalky tannins softened and the length of the finish seemed even more elongated. The blend consists of 40% Tinta Barroca, 30% Touriga Franca, 20% Touriga Nacional and 10% Tinta Roriz. Drink over the course of the next 5-8 years. Very solid QPR! ~ **88 points ~ 10/26/15**

2011 ~ Vale do Bomfim ~ Reserva ~ Douro Red Wine – Smoky and earthy scents lead to a streak of wet stone and chalky minerality, along with saddle leather and rose petal that emerged as it was left in decanter for 90 minutes and blossomed nicely over that time. Full-bodied and loaded with soft and velvety ripe black and brambly blueberry flavors, concentrated, chewy and mouth filling. While it is so primary today, this 2011 will improve over the next year or two, allowing the fruit to fully meld and gain further complexity, as the overall balance of this wine (that comes from the “Dow” property) is its strong suit. Given a reasonable SRP of around \$10, this offers excellent value for money and is extremely food friendly too. It can be enjoyed now, but requires an hour or so in decanter to open up. ~ **90+ points ~ 8/26/15**

1980 ~ Gould Campbell ~ Vintage ~ Port – Possessing a fine bouquet of Kirsch and briary scents, it developed light hints of spearmint the 2nd day. Smooth, medium weight and generously fruited with waves of off-dry dark cherry, almost syrupy in the middle, but with enough acidity to keep it in synch. Right up there with the Dow and Graham's at the top of the 1980 vintage. Suave and filled with 2-3 decades of fine drinking ahead, this 35 year old Vintage Port shows extremely young for its age, yet is beginning to really hit its stride and gain more complexity. The persistent finish is loaded with sweet berry and mocha flavors and this 1980 emerged as one of the best bottles of this VP in recent years. ~ **93+ points ~ 12/6/15**

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